OLD!

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES

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THE RETROBATES

BEST GAMING MOMENT



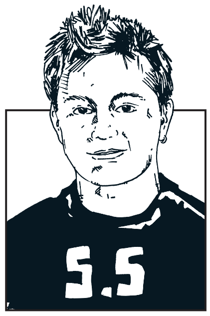
DAVID CROOKES

Playing Codemasters' *Pro Boxing Simulator*, working through the various hard bouts with sweat pouring from my brow, I eventually reached the final – and won! I was Mohammed Ali in my own bedroom!
Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, *Broken Sword*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing: *Operation Wolf*



ASHLEY DAY

When my brother and I thought we had finished *Chuckie Egg*, only to find that it started again but with that giant duck chasing us around. What a great surprise.
Expertise: Games that nobody else seems to like.
Currently playing: *Shining Force III Scenario 3*
Favourite game of all time: *Shining Force III*



SPANNER

As 'research', I spent a whole day completing as many beat-'em-ups as I could find. It was such an achievement I went out mugging people in celebration.
Expertise: Beat-'em-ups
Currently playing: *Target Renegade* & Samurai Warriors
Favourite game of all time: *Double Dragon*



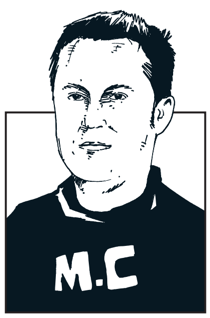
JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

Saturn Bomberman with ten human players. Mere seconds left, while Mr White and Mr Black are drawing dangerously close, suddenly BOOM! The bombs are off, the competition toast, and you the proud champion. Great!
Currently playing: *Super Mario's Wacky Worlds* (prototype)
Favourite game of all time: Doukutsu Monogatari



PAUL DRURY

Playing *Pilotwings* on the SNES throughout the 1994 World Cup with a bunch of Spaniards, getting so good as a team we made the bushy-moustached instructor cry tears of joy.
Expertise: Getting old programmers to confess their drug habits.
Currently playing: *Eyetoy Play 3*. Naked.
Favourite game of all time: *Sheep in Space*



MARTYN CARROLL

For me it has to be bombing along the Death Star's trench in the original *Star Wars* coin-op, darting under and over catwalks before stuffing a shot down Darth Vader's throat. Pure movie-based magic.
Expertise: All things Z80
Currently playing: *Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus*
Favourite game of all time: *Jet Set Willy*



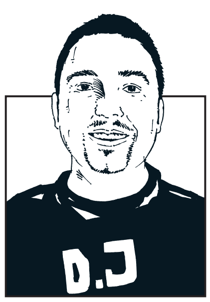
CRAIG GRANNELL

My best gaming moment was when Thomas, my little computer person, first knocked on the inside of the screen to get my attention. Well, that or the whole of *OutRun 2*...
Expertise: Systems/games where you don't need 37 fingers to use the Controller.
Currently playing: *Zoo Keeper*
Favourite game of all time: *H.E.R.O.*



SHAUN BEBBINGTON

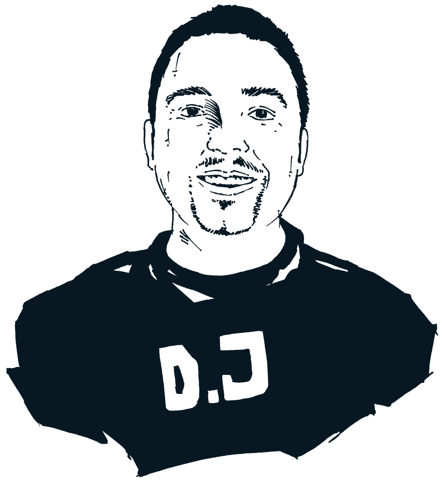
I'd just completed the first level of *Turrican*, and accidentally found the cheat-mode as my mate kept pausing the game on me. Just a screen or so into the second, this giant menacing fist came out of nowhere. It took my breath away.
Expertise: Commodore 64 and other 8-bit computers
Currently playing: *Mr Beanbag*
Favourite game of all time: *Stunt Car Racer* (C64)



DARRAN JONES

Me and my best mate had made it all the way to the end of Double Dragon (using the headbutt and elbow moves) and just defeated the final boss. Having to beat each other up afterwards to see who'd walk away with Marian was a stroke of genius.
Expertise: Running a mag whilst juggling a wife and two kids
Currently playing: Quake 4
Favourite game of all time: Robotron: 2084

LOADING...



True to last month's promise, we've been constantly reviewing feedback from you, the reader, and have subsequently made several adjustments to everyone's favourite retro magazine. The retrospective classic games have now been replaced with in-depth Making of articles, covering all your favourite hits from yesteryear. If you want to know a little more about the creation of Sam & Max Hit the Road, then head on over to page 32. The origins of Impossible Mission's Agent 4125 are revealed on page 60, while Steve Turner chats to us about the innovative Quazatron on page 72.

You told us that you wanted to see more input from the people who were actually involved in the industry at the time, and that's exactly what you're going to get. Gary Liddon reveals his favourite games on page 78, the history of US Gold is explained by its founder, Geoff Brown on page 66, and Tim Schafer hangs out with us on page 40. If that little lot doesn't get your juices flowing, then check your heart – you could well be dead.

Enjoy the magazine.





» Load 22

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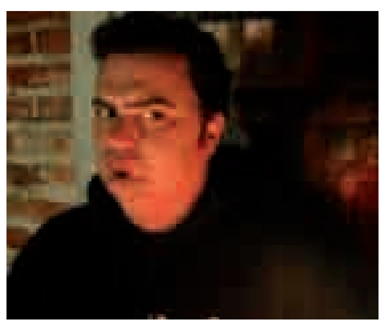
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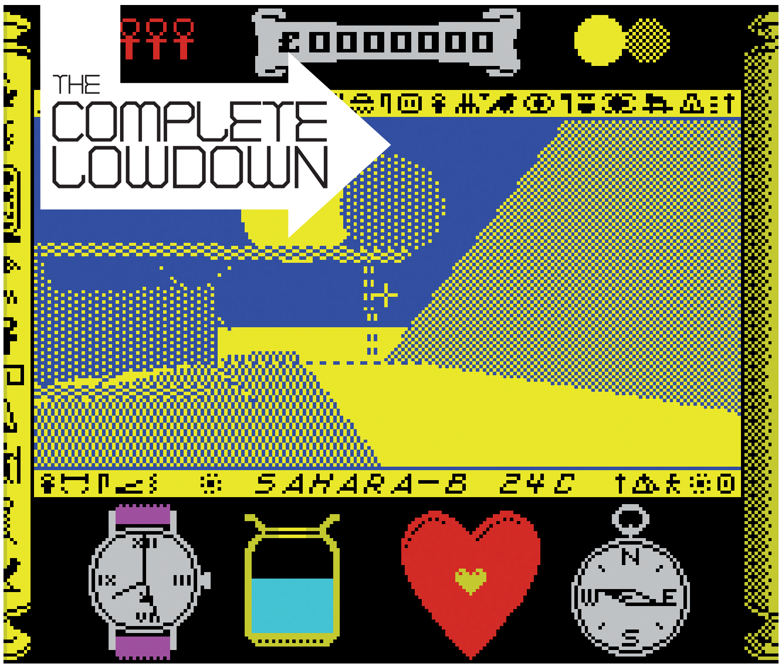
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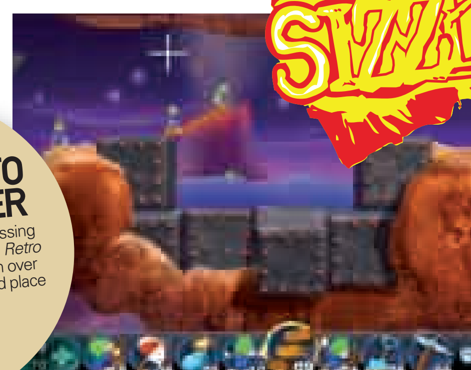
RETRO RATED



THE GAMES LISTING...

If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it

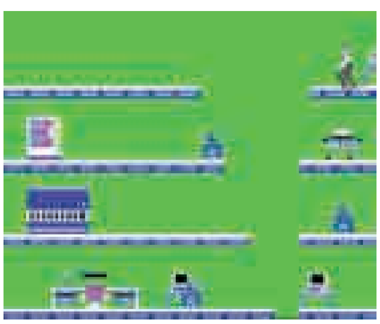
retro GAMER SIZZLER



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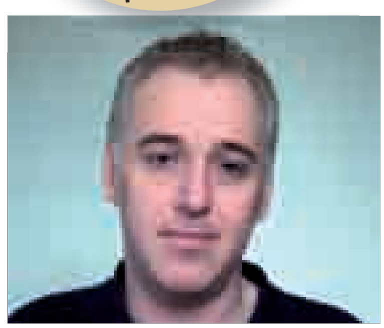
THE MAKING OF...

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION



COMPANY PROFILE

US GOLD



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XPLOSIV SAVINGS

SAVE A SMALL FORTUNE WITH XPLOSIV'S LATEST COMPILATION

Regular readers will already know that we were more than happy with last year's Taito Legends compilation as we gave it a very impressive 88% back in issue 19. As good as last year's effort was; it's small change compared to the fantastic line-up of games that Xplosiv has lined up for the fantastic looking sequel .

While the original compendium featured plenty of classics such as Bubble Bobble, The New Zealand Story, Rastan and Zoo Keeper, those featured in volume 2 cover a far more eclectic range. Although KiKi KaiKai, Don Doko Don and Puchi Carat might not be familiar to Pal gamers, a regular importer will immediately be able to tell you their worth. Many of these games never reached UK shores and as a result, often go for a small fortune on the likes of eBay and specialist Japanese websites when they actually become available. The classic Elevator Action Returns only ever made it to the Saturn before it appeared on last year's Taito Memories Joukan and copies of the Saturn version regularly sell for around the £50 mark. Other expensive titles on Taito Legends 2 include Liquid Kids, Puchi Caret, Cleopatra Fortune, Gun Frontier and Don Doko Don, and that's just the few we can name off the top of our heads. Indeed, if you were to pick up these games singularly you could expect to pay well over £400 for every featured game, yet this amazing compilation is going to set you back no more than £19.99 – or rather £39.98 if you want the complete set. You see, for reasons best known only to Xplosiv, the PS2 and Xbox versions each contain four exclusive titles; meaning that hardcore collectors are going to need to buy both formats in order to complete the full set of games; something we think is very naughty.

PlayStation 2 owners receive Balloon Bomber, Syvalion, G-Darius and Raystorm, whilst Xbox and PC owners are treated to Cadash, Pop 'n Pop, Rayforce and Bubble Symphony. While it grates that these eight games have been split over two formats, there's no denying that Taito Legends 2 still represents excellent value for money.

We've been playing preview build on and off for the past few weeks now and only have a few niggles with it. A minor issue is that many of the games (whilst very good) are nowhere near as popular as those found on the original Taito Legends (mainly because of their Japanese arcade roots).

A more pressing concern however is that some of the games don't seem to be that well emulated. Rayforce in particular seems to be a very poor conversion, but we're confident that these issues will be fixed by the time Taito Legends 2 finally hits the shops. Expect the definitive review in next month's issue of Retro Gamer.

THE GUIDE

What's hot this issue…

TO BE THIS GOOD TAKES BEENA

SEGA RELEASES NEW HARDWARE - DON'T GET TOO EXCITED THOUGH…

Ever since the Dreamcast was unceremoniously booted off gaming shelves the world over, we've longed for Sega to make a glorious hardware comeback.

While rumours have constantly been bandied about (who could forget the portable Dreamcast that was alleged to be unveiled at last year's E3?) none have ever come true. That's all about to change though thanks to a new Japanese machine. Before you begin feverishly praying to the great gaming gods in the sky, Sega's new piece of hardware is unlikely to get you too excited, unless of course you happen to be a small child…

Sega's Beena is basically an update of its Pico system, but features several new enhancements that range from the ability to not having to link it up to a TV (it comes equipped with its own built-in screen) to how long a child can play on a game for. Interestingly though, you can't use old Pico cartridges, despite them being the same size.

There's no indication as to whether the Beena will be appearing in UK stores any time soon, but seeing that the Pico did make it, we can only assume that it's only a matter of time.



GRAND THEFT HACK

HACKERS ONCE AGAIN ALLOW YOU TO PLAY RETRO GAMES ON YOUR PSP

Despite its short shelf life, the PSP already has a bustling home-brew community and has an impressive amount of emulators currently available for it in various stages of completion.



You can download Amstrad, C64, SNES, PC Engine and Mega Drive emulators, and while a few are still rather ropey, many provide perfect emulation.

Sadly, hacking Sony's PSP also makes it susceptible to piracy and like the current batch of home consoles, you can normally find illegal rips of PSP UMDs well before they hit the actual shelves. To combat this, Sony has a stringent update system in place, which constantly re-plugs the holes that inquisitive pirates have already made. These updates are always loaded with the latest desirable PSP title and won't enable you to play said game unless the update is installed.



The latest example was when Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories was released last November. It came equipped with an update that gave hackers all sorts of headaches. Even this though has now been hacked, and just a few months after GTA's release as well. Admittedly, the actual process for allowing you to play all your emulators is rather convoluted, but its authors are confident that it'll only be a matter of time before a simpler method is found. Of course you can be guaranteed that Sony will release yet another new update and then the waltz will just start all over again…

LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH

NO 4: OUTRUN

OutRun makes our loading screen list because it promised so much, yet ultimately, delivered so little. Being fooled by the flashy arcade shots on the back of the cassette box, we were expecting nirvana; and when the loading screen appeared we were instantly hooked - this was going to be amazing! Of course, then the game actually loaded up and we realised that we'd just spent £9.99 on a piece of utter shit. There's a lesson in that somewhere…



APOLOGY

Issue 22's Developer Look Back on Team 17 suggested that the staff of Amiga Power purposely gave out low scores to all Team 17 games. After further investigation, this statement has proven to be untrue and we apologise to all Amiga Power staff members who worked on the magazine.



AMERICA FREE RETRO★

YOUR U.S. TAKE ON THE RETRO SCENE WITH RETRO GAMING RADIO'S SHANE R MONROE



CONVERGENCE FACTOR

If there were any truth to our language, the word CONVERGENCE would be a four-letter word. Our hustle and bustle world no longer seems to have the time or energy to focus on products that excel in their class, but are rather happy to live in a world with devices that are 'jacks of all trades, masters of none'.

Take a look at cell phones. I don't know how many advertisements I've seen for cell phone gaming over the last few months… like just by publishing cool looking ads with half-naked women on them they can cross the gap between 'gaming device' and 'cell phone'. Even with big names behind cell phone gaming like Namco and EA, I'm still not sure that this convergence of communication and gaming can exist.

For us retro gamers, there are a lot of handheld choices. Every gaming system like the Game Boy Advance, Nintendo DS or PSP has their share of "retro game packs" (hit and miss, of course) – so there are always those options. High-end handhelds complete with fat touch screens and oodles of memory can indeed run some emulators, and give a somewhat useful experience in playing some of our old games. These devices run on scaled down OSs that allow single-man and small team game development to happen cheaply, and they have been around for the best part of a decade. So what's wrong?

Unfortunately, these powerhouse devices don't gain the benefits of dedicated gaming devices (like cheap-to-own price tags and huge volumes of third party commercial games). If you're lucky like you blokes over in the UK, you can get one of these 'god-like' handhelds for next to nothing when you sign up with your cell phone company. Those of us living in the world of practically-rape-capitalism aren't so fortunate. Dell's website currently shows the cheapest Axim handheld to be about $320 – and that isn't exactly the ultimate powerhouse. That's no longer an impulse buy, like the $99 GBA Micro.

We've seen convergence already happen – cell phones are now cameras and PDAs, as well as wireless communication devices – but how does this "communications device" end up playing games?

Let's ask the good folks over at Nokia. The N-Gage wasn't even close to a success by anyone's measure, with prices of the unit slashing by 30% or more in less than a year. While many people blame poor design and marketing as the reason for the N-Gage's failure, I have a different idea in mind.

Convergence hasn't been kind to some other companies, either. Makers of the recently released All-In-One-Gaming device Gizmondo are already looking to file bankruptcy. Even the yummy Danni Minogue (they should have gotten Kylie) couldn't get enough people to save Gizmondo right out of the gate. I blame the evil convergence bug.

The fact is, convergence devices are failing. People like their dedicated iPods. People like their super tiny in-ear cell phones. People like their eight megapixel 10x optical zoom digital cameras, that practically come inside a box of cold cereal now. Of course, people like their dedicated gaming devices, too.

I've been gaming electronically for nearly 30 years. I've played everything from Mattel Football to early consoles to megalithic handhelds (aka the luggables) to modern consoles and the latest handheld gaming devices. I've yet to be happy playing a game on any cell phone I've had. Even games that should be playable on cell phones, like *Bejeweled* or *Tetris*, have proven frustrating – either the controls are horrible, or you're paying over and over to play them (or worse yet – airtime charges). These devices tend to be completely locked down – forcing your reliance on 'virtual ownership' for everything.

Gamers want three things – big beautiful screens, super easy to use controls, and of course, the biggest library of software possible. Convergence, by the very nature of the beast, doesn't tend to include gaming. Handhelds may have the big beautiful screen,





SHANE R MONROE IS THE PROUD OWNER OF POPULAR INTERNET RADIO SHOW, RETRO GAMING RADIO. HEAD ON OVER TO HTTP://WWW.RETROGAMINGRADIO.COM IF YOU WANT TO CATCH HIS LATEST SHOW.

maybe even controls that aren't horrible – but they don't have the software library. Cell phones are all about the 'smallest size possible' – which counters the big beautiful screen that those PSP lovers want. Most cell phones and handhelds I've played with have horrific controls that are barely usable for their primary usage. Software libraries only come with the 'console model' of gaming – cheap hardware with extensive third party support unified under closed system architecture. Handhelds and cell phones do not fall under that model; nor are they likely to – there are just too many hands in the pie.

Gaming on the go will continue to be provided by dedicated devices – or devices like the GP2x that support open community development, those where 'after-market' profit isn't the driving force of the sale. While some of you may be disappointed to have to continue to cart around two or more devices, some of us are quite happy to have mastery devices that do what they do best.

Keep it retro!
Shane

ZERO HOUR

CAPCOM ANNOUNCES A BRAND NEW STREET FIGHTER COMPILATION FOR THE PLAYSTATION2

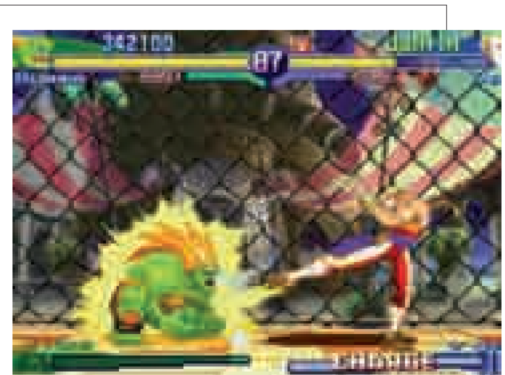
There's certainly a lot of *Street Fighter* love going around the *Retro Gamer* offices at the moment. *Street Fighter 2 Turbo* is actually now getting played instead of being cruelly mocked, the 360 boys are regularly getting their arses handed to them at *Street Fighter 3: Third Strike*, and we are playing as much *Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max* on the PSP as is humanly possible.

Yup, we're certainly loving the antics of Ryu, Ken and co at the moment, and the *Street Fighter* love-in looks set to continue, as Capcom has announced yet another fantastic-sounding compilation that's bound to go down a storm with fans of the long-running franchise.

Street Fighter Alpha Anthology is set to feature arcade conversions of *Street Fighter Alpha*, *Street Fighter Alpha 2*, *Street Fighter Alpha 2 Gold* and *Street Fighter Alpha 3* on one lovely PS2 disc.

If that's not enough, *Super Gem Fighter Mini-Mix* (or *Pocket Fighters*, as it's better known) will also be included. While each game has already been available on previous consoles and compilations, this is the first time that they've all appeared together and it is likely to be a huge hit (pun most definitely intended) with *Street Fighter* fans upon its eventual release.

Interestingly, no Xbox version has been confirmed yet (it would rule online), and it's only been announced in the US thus far, but we're confident that you'll see it in the UK before the year's out. Now make our year and announce a *Vs* compilation.





» *Street Fight Alpha 3* If this doesn't make it to the UK it will be a crime against humanity. Well…PAL gamers

NINTENDO ANNOUNCES AN ONLINE VERSION OF TETRIS FOR ITS DS

GET LINES ONLINE

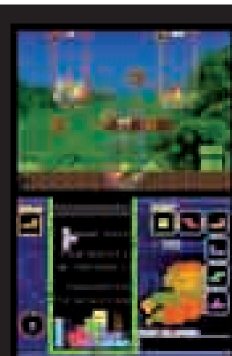
Nintendo has finally revealed that the daddy of all handheld puzzle games is on its way to the DS, and by golly it's looking mighty fine.

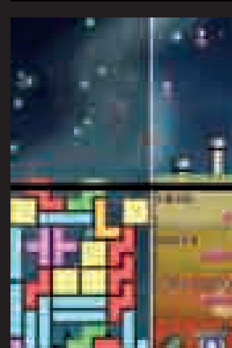
Tetris, the game considered by many to be the greatest puzzler ever made (hell, we're still playing it) is due to hit the DS in the next few months, and comes complete with plenty of funky new options to ensure that it feels nice and fresh for a new generation of gamers to enjoy.

Nintendo is including six different modes of play that will be themed on popular Nintendo characters, so expect to see the likes of Link, Mario and Samus Arun regularly popping up as you construct your lines of blocks.

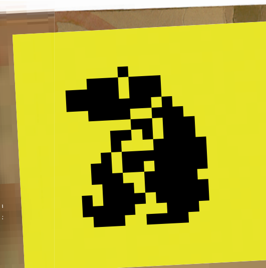
While Nintendo is assuring us that the classic line-clearing strategies of old will appear, it has also made it quite clear that the DS's touch screen will be used to enhance the gameplay and give *Tetris* a fresh spin.

What's got us really excited, though, is the announcement that you'll be able to take part in massive wireless battles online. Up to ten DS owners will be able to face-off against each other, even if only one person has the actual DS cartridge. Let the battling commence.





HERO OF THE MONTH



MONTY MOLE

Every month, *Retro Gamer* looks back at a classic videogame hero. This month it's Gremlin Graphics' loveable Monty Mole.

First Appearance: *Wanted: Monty Mole*

Distinguishing Features: Tracksuit

Weapon of choice: None, he's a mole

Most Likely to: Get into trouble with immigration laws

Least Likely to: Make a 3D comeback

Unusual fact: *Wanted: Monty Mole* drew much attention in the news at its time of release and is considered to be a caricature of Arthur Scargill

retro* GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO…

EVENT HOSTING retro* GAMER
IF YOU WANT RETRO GAMER TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, DROP US A LINE AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

Just because *Retro Gamer* looks to the past that doesn't mean that there aren't games and events to look forward to. Every month we'll be listing suitable games and events that you be adding to your 'to do' list.



MARCH '06

WORMS: OPEN WARFARE

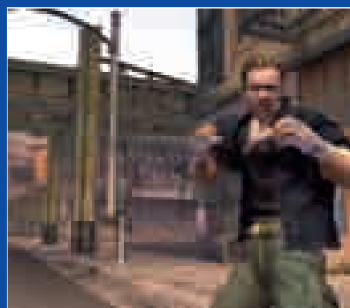
Released: 17 March

Publisher: THQ

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP/DS

Good old Team 17. Not content with releasing a fantastic update of *Lemmings* for the PSP, its next project is a brand new *Worms* game for everyone's favourite handhelds. Forget the so-so 3D versions of old though, as this iteration of Annelid warfare will take place in glorious 2D, and looks like an impressive return to form. We can't wait.



MARCH '06

FINAL FIGHT: STREETWISE

Released: 24 March

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £39.99

Format: PS2, Xbox

To be honest we're in two minds about this particular title. While it's great to see a classic title like *Final Fight* getting resurrected, it's all looking just a little too bling! for our liking. Capcom is king of the combo system though, so hopefully the actual fighting system will be fine. Hopefully…



MARCH '06

CAPCOM CLASSICS REMIXED

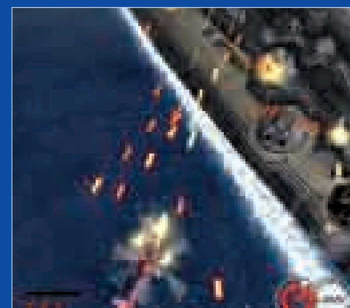
Released: 24 March

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

Why do you tease us so Capcom? We don't ask for much in life; we just want the ability to play perfect arcade conversions of *Strider, Captain Commando, Black Tiger, Three Wonders, Magic Sword, 1941* on our humble PSPs. Now that's not exactly a lot for us to ask for, is it?



MARCH '06

UNDER DEFEAT

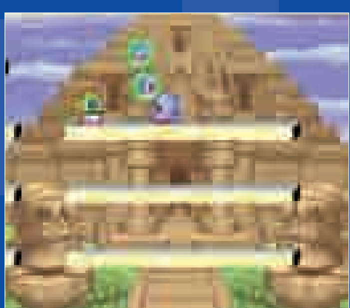
Released: 23 March

Publisher: G.Rev

Price: 9,246 Yen (Import)

Format: Dreamcast

Praise the lord; it's yet another superb shooter from those crazy chaps at G.Rev. *Border Down* proved to be an outstanding Dreamcast debut for the Japanese developers, and it's now decided to bring yet another one of its arcade games to Sega's wonder machine. We'll hopefully have a full review for you next month.



MARCH '06

TAITO LEGENDS II

Released: 31 March

Publisher: Xplosiv

Price: £19.99

Format: PS2, Xbox, PC

Yes. It seems like an age, but we've finally received early code and it's looking mighty fine. *Elevator Action Returns, Puzzle Bobble 2, Don Doko Don*, they all play just as we remember them. Our only annoyance is that Xplosiv has decided to spread eight games across both the PS2 and Xbox, thus forcing retro fans to buy both sets!



MARCH '06

OUTRUN 2006: COAST 2 COAST

Released: 31 March

Publisher: Sega

Price: £39.99

Format: PSP, PS2, Xbox, PC

Sneaky Sega, there was a Xbox version of *Outrun 2006* planned all along, it just wanted to keep it a secret. Well the secret's out now and an early play suggests that this latest version of *OutRun* is going to be just as good as we were hoping for. Expect a full review in next month's issue.



APRIL '06

SENSIBLE SOCCER

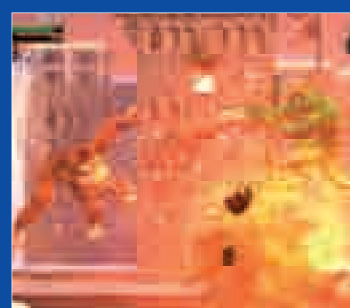
Released: 07 April

Publisher: Codemasters

Price: £39.99

Format: PS2, Xbox, PC

In a world of *FIFA's* and *Pro Evolutions*, it's great to see Jon Hare going back to basics and focusing on the gameplay that made the original Sensi games so much fun to play. There have been complaints about the player's over-sized heads and choice of viewpoint, and whether the franchise should be updated, but we're still looking forward to it



APRIL '06

RAMPAGE: TOTAL DESTRUCTION

Released: 07 April

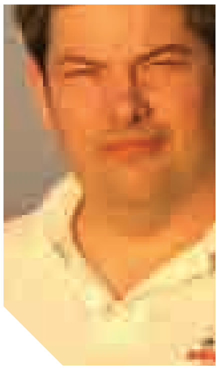
Publisher: Midway

Price: £39.99

Format: PS2, Xbox

While we love Midway's Arcade Treasures range, we've not been too impressed with its current generation re-imaginings of past hits. While *Gauntlet* proved to be reasonably enjoyable, *NARC* was a total pig's ear. Needless to say, we'll be monitoring *Rampage: Total Destruction* with great interest…

eMag





» It would appear that the Americans have a lot to learn about darts

"NEEDLESS TO SAY WE DIDN'T AGREE TO THE REQUEST AND, STRANGELY, WE DIDN'T GET PAID FOR A COUPLE OF MONTHS" ARCHER MACLEAN



» Were you ever able to find the hidden mouse room?

COMMENT

THE BUG REPORT

MUSINGS FROM THE MIND OF MACLEAN

In the early days of games development there was no bug testing or approval processes that all developers now have to endure. A publisher would just about test a game to see if it worked or crashed, and was more interested in getting it in a box and out the door.

Nowadays, strict game design rules enforced by console manufacturers on a development team are so tight that almost all 'personality' is removed from a game's final design. Obviously I understand why the big console manufacturers want to maintain standards, but as a game developer I've heard some very bizarre game bugs and suggestions for their improvements over the years. Here are just a few of them…

Back in 1997 when 3D accelerators were just becoming accepted, the small team at Awesome was developing what would become *Jimmy Whites 2: Cueball 2*. Very early on in the contractually agreed project schedule we had our second or third publisher milestone meeting where they would work out if they should actually pay us anything. This manager came up and we showed off an early demo of our hardware renderer featuring a textured rectangular green polygon spinning around (which would eventually become the game's snooker table). And this bloke more or less said, "yes, yes, very nice, but we have a gap in our development rollout and need to plug it to hit financial targets, so can you just adapt that green rectangle thing into a green football pitch so we can publish a football game instead?" This met with gob-smacked silence from the producer and myself. Needless to say we didn't agree to the request and, strangely, we didn't get paid for a couple of months, as they tried to force us to change it into *FIFA Snooker*. It all went tits up anyway because Electronic Arts assimilated the publisher and all hell broke loose because of all the development contracts.

Eventually we got a letter from our new publisher in America demanding a version of *JW's Cueball 2* so that their hungry test department could assign 50 testers to it (the game itself was developed with less than 10 people). *Cueball 2* had a dozen interactive sub-games and Easter eggs, one of which was a fully playable game of darts using a nice mouse controlled throwing mechanism. Two months later we received a formidable list of 'bugs'. My favourite one was 'when playing darts why does the computer player seem to aim at Treble 20 all the time, and why does he usually miss?' No kidding!

One of the strangest questions ever though, was after an American developer licensed *Cueball* (a full blown 3D PC game needing 300mb of hard disk…) so that it could squeeze it into a Game Boy Color… We did the deal, and heard nothing until six months later when they sent us a simple demo showing a primitive looking 2D top-down Snooker demo and asked the following question: 'We've run out of sprites on the Game Boy. Do you think anyone in Englandshire will notice if the snooker game has only 9 Reds on the table? We'll adjust the scoring of the blue, pink and black balls so that players can still get a 147, because that's the most important thing. Right?' Honest. That was for real. I've run out of space as usual, so I can't tell you about the time a publisher insisted I put big trees on *Dropzone's* planetscape and other stories. In a future article I'll reveal the hidden Easter eggs within *Cueball 2* (ever find the hidden mouse hole room?), as well as the 50 things you didn't know you could actually do with the 16-bit versions of *IK+*…



» An in-game joke that nobody seemed to get…

eMag





WITH FIRE AND SWORD

JOHN SZCZEPANIAK AGAIN INDULGES HIS PASSION FOR THE WORLD'S FINEST SPIRITS, BY VISITING HIS PATERNAL MOTHERLAND POLAND. OH, AND HE ALSO CHATS WITH A LOCAL LEGEND ABOUT TELEVISION ADVERTS, VISITS SOME INTERESTING MARKET PLACES, AND CHECKS OUT ATARI TRIVIA.



As mentioned by Paweł Sikorski, Polish group L.K Avalon were involved with several games for the Atari XL/XE. **Clockwise:** *Adax* (action), *Fatum* (shmup), *Frank and Mark* (creepy platformer), and *Fred* (platformer). There are far too many games from Poland to cover!

Below: A short lived, Atari retrospective magazine from Poland, 2002



Czeŝĉ Czytelnicy! (Hello readers!) The last issue promised further coverage from behind the iron curtain, and so travelling to the East I bring you a brief snapshot from Poland.

Arguably Poland's first contribution to the videogame world was in 1928, with the birth of Idek Tramielski. Though readers are more likely to recognise him as Jack Tramiel, founder of Commodore and then owner of Atari. Held in a concentration camp during WW2 he emigrated to the United States in 1947, and went on to significantly manipulate the course of videogames around the world. The rest is history, and Mr Tramielski is correctly regarded as one of the most influential figures of all time. Though because he was incredibly unscrupulous and ruthless in business (reported by dozens of other publications), it's debatable how proud Poland should actually be of the man.

BEFORE SOLIDARNO

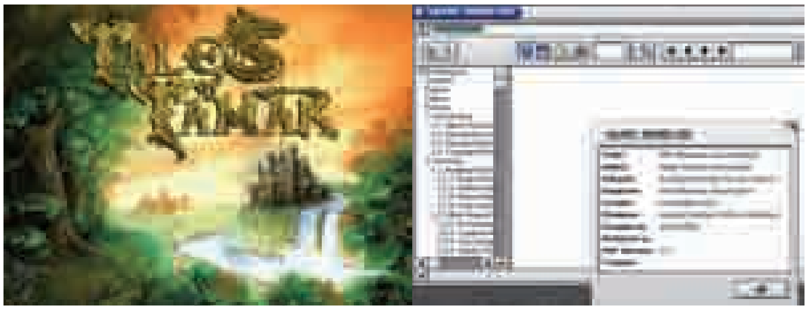
Wanting the inside story, I tracked down someone who grew up in Poland during communism. The 29 year old Warsaw residing Michal Golebiowski is the man behind the videogame TV ad archive http://gameads.gamepressure.com/, which now has over 2300 adverts (expect a full interview in the future). This self proclaimed fan of skiing, heavy metal and Stanley Kubrick is arguably the best person to ask questions, since during the 1990s he worked for three different Polish games magazines: the now defunct 'Secret Service' and 'Neo' publications, and also 'Neo Plus'. He jovially informs us, "Of course I like videogames, and have over 240 in total from all over the world."

We talk about life and games before the collapse of communism, an existence difficult to comprehend unless you've experienced it. "Good question! I live in Poland and I think most Retro Gamer readers can't imagine what life was like in Eastern Europe during the '80s. Life behind the Iron Curtain. You had to stay in line for hours to buy a piece of meat or sugar or gasoline. It's hard to believe but it's true.

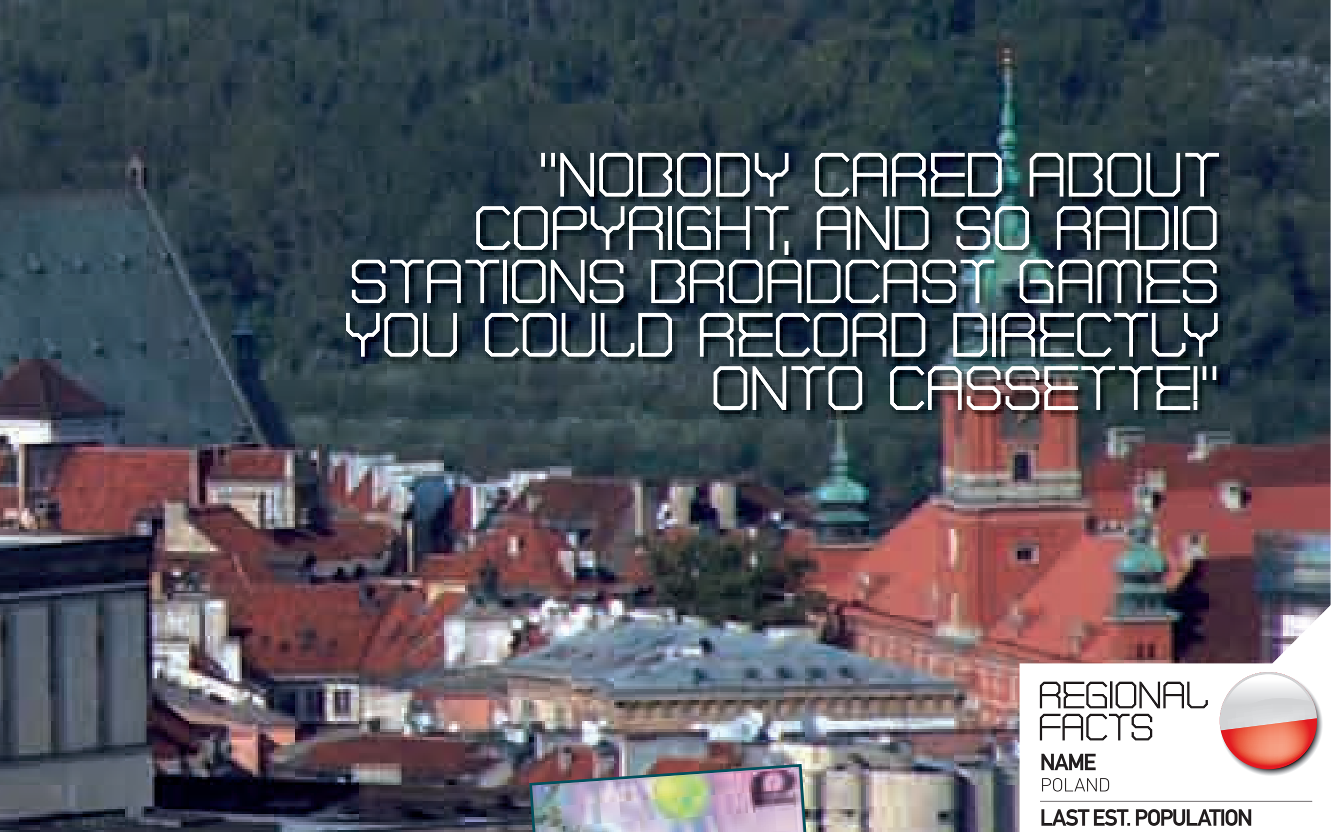
When I was young I received a ZX Spectrum 48 (a special gift from my elder brother after he finished primary school), while my neighbour got a Commodore 64. We used to play games like *Knight Lore*, *Ant Attack* and *Bomb Jack* on ZX Spectrum, and *Green Beret*, *Rambo* and *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* on the C64. I had the best of both worlds!

You couldn't buy these computers in local stores with Polish currency – the Złotych. You had to go to special stores called 'Pewex'. There you could buy an Atari 800 XL for $125. Nobody cared about copyright and so some Polish radio stations broadcast games that you could record directly from the radio onto cassette! This is something that I have not heard many people speak of outside of Poland." Doing some investigating reveals that other East-Bloc countries such as the former Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia did the same, and for several audio tape based systems, such as the Spectrum. The presenter would describe the game and then tell listeners to start recording, before broadcasting it over the airwaves. An ingenious method of early mass distribution.

We also spoke to software developer



There's HUGE popularity for Atari in Eastern Europe, with a demo scene and new software still being released for the ST and even XL/XE! Here we see the port of '*Tales of Tamar*' and '*MyPDF*', both by Rafal Kawecki for Atari hardware.



"NOBODY CARED ABOUT COPYRIGHT, AND SO RADIO STATIONS BROADCAST GAMES YOU COULD RECORD DIRECTLY ONTO CASSETTE!"

REGIONAL FACTS

NAME
POLAND

LAST EST. POPULATION
38 MILLION (2005 ESTIMATION)

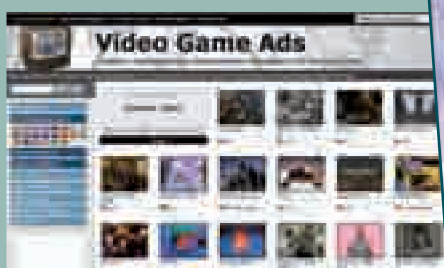
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE(S)
POLISH

TIME ZONES
GMT+1 (+2 IN THE SUMMER)

TV TYPE
PAL

VOLTAGE
220V

CURRENCY
ZłOTY





Far left: A massively comprehensive online project, born of Polish will. Check it out, some of those old TV spots are hilarious.

Left: A very old Pewex poster, the caption loosely translates as "A computer for a Christmas present"

Paweł Sikorski, "There were some small leaks from behind the iron curtain - first video games in bars and then so called game saloons. From 1985 the first computer clubs were created, usually offering programming courses. Mainly it was the first and only occasion for young people to get in touch with computers (I was taking the Atari Basic course by myself in the Warsaw Culture House).

Later, in 1986 the first Commodore 64s appeared, [and also] Timex computers (a ZX Spectrum clone).

At the end of 1987 a great Atari-related event took place in Warsaw's Torwar - Atariada. Quickly coder groups started – the beginning of The Scene. Despite great piracy (legal software was hard to obtain) the first software companies appeared (like L.K Avalon), which produced games for Atari. Thanks to Polish software more and more groups formed, people started to meet at copy-parties, which are legendary today. There were also many paper magazines about Atari, including my own creation: Atarynka. Polish market was one of the biggest Atari markets, almost as big as the one in West Germany. The most significant thing on the Polish Atari scene is (not only in my opinion) great friendship." Browsing various online Atari games listings, we were pleased to find that Poland has had quite a hand in games development over the years.



Left: Another Atari magazine, this time from 1993. They sure do love their Atari systems!

FAREWELL TO TARGOWISKO

Then there are the once magnificent targowisko (markets), which are slowly disappearing. In my youth I'd often visit; sometimes a weekly village market in the square, other times travelling a few hours to enormous daily markets. The larger ones consisted of dozens of rows of permanent stalls snaking across the landscape, taking nearly an hour to briskly walk across. They sold every kind of imaginable item. My main point of interest though, was not the high quality local goods but the videogame oddities from afar. Game stalls in markets are not hard to spot, often being presided over by large bearded Russians who wouldn't look out of place in films about mercenaries. These travelling merchants sold items not documented by standard bureaucracy. With ex-KGB equipment (knives, military binoculars etc.) to my left and authentic Russian Beluga Caviar to my right, the smuggled videogames sat between. We both haggled in broken Polish over prices, before agreeing on a bearskin hat, two strange pieces of hardware and a box of assorted cartridges, floppies and CDs.

As reported by the "International Intellectual Property Alliance", such markets contain Russian made Dendy systems and Atari computer clones, plus "pirate cartridges manufactured in China then shipped via Hong Kong". Regarding CD media, it's PS1 copies that have been unofficially translated into either Russian or Polish (often the sleeve is only translated, while the game is English) and sold for around $2 each. IIPA also reports that Vietnamese triads are trading gaming oddities sourced as far as Cambodia and Laos, whilst clashing with Russian mafia for trafficking control of pirate media at Polish markets. These insipid reports though cannot capture the exotic air of finding unusual bargains or desirable rarities. Somehow these smugglers occasionally have nice (though obviously stolen) legitimate products available. The IIPA's detestable solution to the situation was to call for the halting of all videogame sales at markets, thinking it better that none be allowed to play if they couldn't afford authorised products.

With the collapse of communism and eventually joining Europe, changes were enforced. As well as banning the national dish 'Bigos' (hunters stew) and national drink 'Spiritus' (95% vol.), there are no longer such exotic markets carrying videogames, while commercial shops have become uninteresting due to official endorsement by big Western corporations. As we enter one new era, we wave farewell to another. Was it really worth it?

Du Zubaczenia (until next time).

"PEWEX"

During communism many items were difficult to acquire or simply unavailable to many Polish citizens. This was especially so of luxury goods. In the late 70s the state set up a chain of stores in most cities called Pewex, that sold luxury imported goods and local products meant for export. While anyone was allowed to visit Pewex (though there were secret stores that only important communist officials knew of and could visit), the fact that it dealt strictly in foreign currency such as Dollars and Sterling meant that the average person couldn't buy anything. It was illegal for ordinary people to even own foreign money, meaning mainly foreigners, VIPs and those who worked abroad were eligible. Shopping at Pewex became a sign of prestige since it was the place to go if you wanted high quality TVs, or imported computers and videogames. There was no simply walking into WH Smith to buy Speccy tapes!

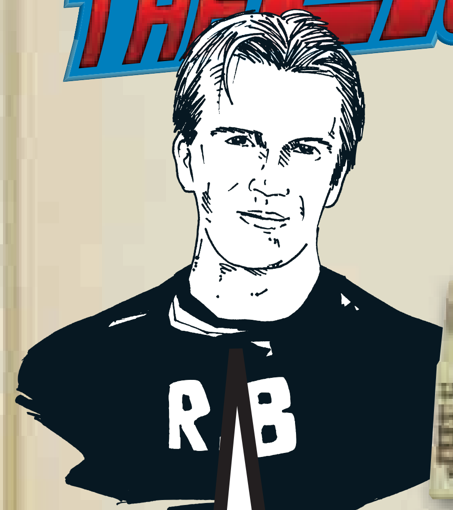


Above: *Shopping at Pewex. Not everyone was eligible to shop there, but those that could managed to find plenty of essential items.*

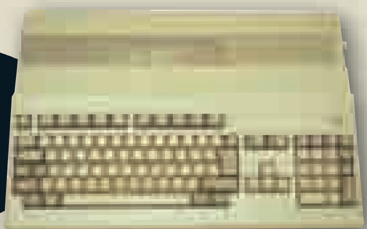
THANKS GO OUT TO MICHAL GOLEBIOWSKI (HTTP://GAMEADS. GAMEPRESSURE.COM/), AND GRY-ONLINE.PL FOR AIDING HIS WEBSITE. ALSO THANKS TO PAWEŁ SIKORSKI OF SIKOR SOFT FOR ASSISTANCE, AND ALL THE REST OF WWW. ATARI8.INFO FOR THEIR HELP (CHECK OUT THE RG FORUM FOR FURTHER PERSONAL ANECDOTES).

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM MARCH 1986



March 1986, a month of new computers and software house takeovers. The new Spectrum 128K was enduring a few teething problems whilst space trading game *Elite* was suffering from every conceivable problem that could possibly befall it. Meanwhile, up in the sky a comet flew by…



» With Commodore and Atari squaring up with new computers – let the 16 bit wars begin…

After the fanfare and hoorah of Sinclair's 128K Spectrum release the previous month, the first inklings of incompatibility problems started to become known. Several software houses found that their 48K games would not run on the new machine.

Biggest non-loading failure was *Elite* from Firebird although newly patched versions would be out within the month. Melbourne House also highlighted further problems with the machine. All their games would load fine until the addition of a Kempston joystick and then suddenly none of the games would work at all. Kempston stated they were aware of the situation and would work towards rectifying the problem.

To compound Firebird's difficulties further they found they also had problems with the initial production run of the Amstrad version of Elite that had recently been released. An unnoticed bug had caused the game to become totally unplayable. Firebird quickly ran advertisements in several magazines asking for the offending cassettes to be returned for a free debugged replacement to placate miffed CPC owners.



» Activision buy up Infocom and an awesome back catalogue of adventures including the *Zork* trilogy.

And for a triple whammy Elite lash-up let us not forget the Spectrum Lenslok problems which involved 500 copies of the game being shipped with the wrong Lenslok included effectively making the package useless. Not the greatest few weeks in Firebird's history.

Commodore, after months of waiting, finally announced a firm date for the release of their new Amiga computer. The 512K machine would me making its official debut at the Commodore Show in London on May 9th.

Not to be outdone Atari also announced that it would launch several new ST products at the inaugural Atari Computer Show to be held at the Novotel in Hammersmith between the 7th and 9th of March.

The Atari 1040STF as well as two new 520 ST machines, the 520STM and the 520STFM, would be making their first UK appearances at the show. The STM was a standard 520 machine with the added extra of a modulator so that it could be used on a television as well as a monitor. The STFM was the same as the STM machines but came complete with a built-in disk drive. Nice.

Pioneering adventure creators Infocom, famous for its *Zork* trilogy, *The Leather Goddesses Of Phobos* and *The Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy* adventures, were targeted for takeover by Activision after a $7.5 million agreement was accepted. Although a few details had to be ironed out between the companies the takeover was made final in mid June.

Another software house takeover was British Telecom who added to its ever growing stable of companies with the acquisition of Odin Computer Graphics. Odin's most famous and best selling releases were the *Nodes Of Yesod* and *Robin Of The Wood*.

All rights from future Odin releases would become BT's property although Odin would still remain based in Liverpool and would be left to develop the new games themselves. First of the new games to be released would be *Heartland* and *ICUPS*.



» The first in the David Jones's *Magic Knight* series and a top seller on all formats during 1985.

After bumper sales of software in 1985 the official top five selling games for the year were revealed by Gallup. At the pinnacle of the software mountain was *The Way Of The Exploding Fist* (Melbourne House), a close second was the charity compilation *Soft Aid*. *Elite* (Firebird/Acornsoft) came in at third with *Ghostbusters* (Activision) and *Finders Keepers* (Mastertronic) coming fourth and fifth.

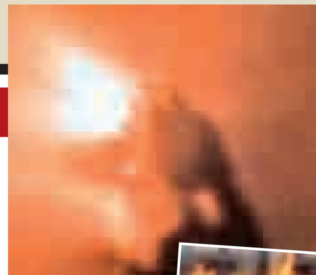
No doubt fuelled by the massive enthusiasm of Halley's Comet visiting the skies after a 76 year absence and the Giotto probe encountering the comet at close range, Firebird revealed the latest game in its Hot Range, the rather unimaginatively titled *The Comet Game*. In reality, the game was several little sub-games intermingled with tasks such as shooting germs and making coffee. Gareth Hunt would love it…

In the magazines of the month there was once again a superlative selection of software released. In Crash there was a bumper crop of games receiving Crash Smash status. Eight games caught the eye: *Movie* (Imagine), *Spitfire 40* (Mirrorsoft), *The Worm In Paradise* (Level 9), *Sir Fred* (Mikro-Gen), *Lord Of The Rings* (Melbourne House), *Their Finest Hour* (Century Communications), *Winter Games* (US Gold) and *Three Weeks In Paradise* (Mikro-Gen).

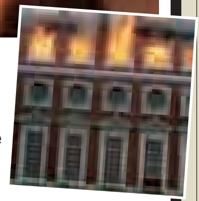
Commie counterpart Zzap! wasn't short of a classic or two either. Supreme champion and with an almost near perfect 98% rating was *Mercenary* (Novagen)

1986

MARCH NEWS



» Halley's Comet was the main highlight of March. Ooh, pretty…



With Halley's Comet prominent in the sky as well as in the news, it was unsurprising to find the chunk of ice taking most of the news headlines. And seemingly, space probes are like buses, you don't see one for aeons and then six come along at once…

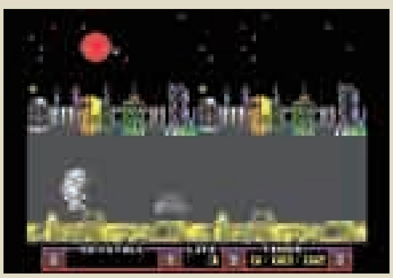
Russian probes, Vega 1 and 2, also intercepted Halley on the 6th and 9th respectively. They were used to measure the comet's physical dimensions as well the compositions of the dust and gas around Halley. They were also used as guides for Europe's Giotto probe to pinpoint its close-up flyby.

On March 13th the European Space Agency space probe, Giotto, flew within 370 miles of the nucleus of Halley's Comet where it took its readings, measurements and some incredible images.

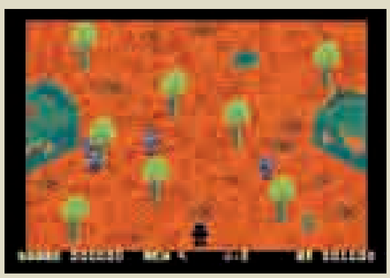
Down on the ground, or rather burnt to the ground, was Hampton Court Palace. On the 31st, a devastating fire rip through the south wing of Hampton Court Palace, the oldest surviving Tudor palace in England and favourite home to the rotund monarch Henry VIII.

The wing was eventually reconstructed taking six years of painstaking rebuilding and restoration.

On March 9th, the US Navy finally found the crew compartment of the space shuttle Challenger which exploded on take-off on the 28th January. The bodies of all seven astronauts were still inside and strapped into their seats.



» *Arc Of Yesod* saw spaceman Charlemagne Fotheringham-Grunes wandering around once again looking for the monolith.



» Although a clone of *Commando*, Alligata's *Who Dares Wins 2* was an excellent addition to the CPC gamers collection.

picking up a well deserved Gold Medal. The Sizzlers weren't too shabby either with classics such as *Arc Of Yesod* (Thor), *Hardball* (US Gold), *Borrowed Time* (Activision), *Germany 1985* (SSi) and *Uridium* (Hewson).

Once again Ultimate failed to impress the Zzap! reviewers with their two new releases, *Nightshade* and *Dragonskulle*. Both received very lacklustre scores of 54% and 49% respectively.

Not to be outshone Amtix! reviewed and rated some praiseworthy games for the discerning CPC lover. Amtix! Accolades were handed out to four games. The first was *Spindizzy* (Electric Dreams) receiving a humungous 98%. What made this all the more sweet for the Amstrad owners was that this piece of gaming excellence was only available, at that time, on the CPC. It certainly helped to raise the Amstrad's gaming profile as well as a few envious eyebrows from other 8-bit owning gamesters. Naturally conversions quickly followed…

The other Amtix! Accolades were awarded to Who Dares Wins 2 (Alligata), Spellbound (Mastertronic) and Ping Pong (Imagine).



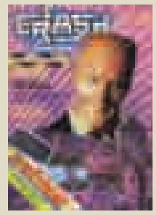
» Seemingly inaccessible diamonds and puzzle based floor icons made *Spindizzy* infuriatingly difficult but superbly challenging.



» If the floating hand didn't mentally warp you too much *Ping Pong* was actually quite a good game.

THIS MONTH IN...

Crash Flash



With Crash highlighting up and coming game, *Max Headroom*, this was reflected with Max grinning suitably smugly from the cover of the March issue albeit in photo form rather than the usual Oliver Frey interpretation. Blipvert over…



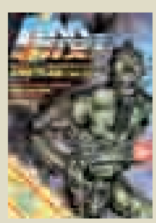
Zzap! Back



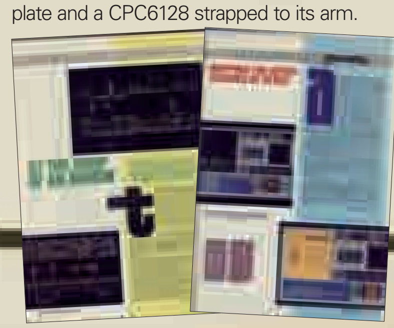
For a classic space fantasy cover look no further than issue 11 of Zzap! With a spacecraft under fire from troopers, it was certainly a memorable Frey cover with possibly a nod toward the month's Gold Medal winning game, *Mercenary* from Novagen.



Amtix! Antics



Amtix! featured a cover which, interestingly, had no connection to any game. A green humanoid gun-toting lizard-like figure stands menacingly with tubes protruding from various body parts and a CPC464 as part of a breast-plate and a CPC6128 strapped to its arm.



CHARTS

MARCH 1986

AMSTRAD



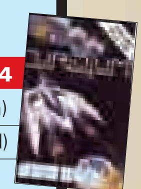
1. Rambo (Ocean)
2. Tau Ceti (CRL)
3. Yie Ar Kung Fu (Imagine)
4. Sky Fox (Ariolasoft)
5. Finders Keepers (Mastertronic)

SPECTRUM



1. Movie (Imagine)
2. FA Cup Football (Virgin)
3. Incredible Shrinking Fireman (Mastertronic)
4. Hyper Sports (Imagine)
5. Devils Crown (Mastertronic)

COMMODORE 64



1. Uridium (Hewson)
2. Hardball (US Gold)
3. Yie Ar Kung Fu (Imagine)
4. Kung Fu Master (US Gold)
5. Elektra Glide (English Software)

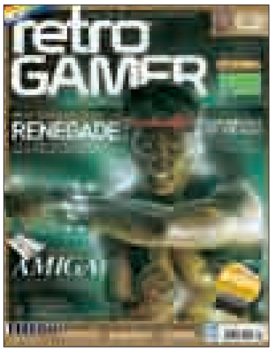
MUSIC SINGLES CHART MARCH '86

1. Chain Reaction (Diana Ross)
2. Manic Monday (The Bangles)
3. When The Going Gets Tough (Billy Ocean)
4. Love Missile F1-11 (Sigue Sigue Sputnik)
5. Absolute Beginners (David Bowie)



THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



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imagine-publishing.co.uk

MORE THAN WORDS…

Dear Retro Gamer,
I simply had to share my impression of your wonderful magazine. You guys have made possible something I never thought would actually happen. It's like Genesis regrouping into its original set-up and being multiplied by 128(K). Retro Gamer is so bloody impressive that I can't find the words to describe it.

My only concern is that not enough people are aware of your fantastic publication. We held a small Speccy meeting recently in the Czech Republic and none of my Speccy chums were even aware of your incredible mag. Surely there are ways that you can improve its circulation? I myself learned about Retro Gamer over half a year ago and even that was by accident. All retro-lovers MUST be aware of the fact that Retrogamer is here! Perhaps a short note at www.worldofspectrum.org and similar web pages would do it?

Martin Blazek via email





EVERY MONTH ONE lucky reader will receive a cool Fossil arcade watch courtesy of those lovely people at Fossil and Atari. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought provoking piece of literature that melts our souls; failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

Glad you're enjoying the magazine Martin, and don't worry about distribution, Retro Gamer's circulation improves with each passing month. We're sure you'll see it on shelves very soon…

PLEASE SIR, I WANT MORE

Hello Retro Gamer,

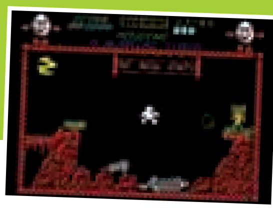
It's great to see you back on the shelves and I have to say that I LOVE the new format. I must admit that I was worried that the new format wouldn't be any good and that the mag would lose its 'retro flavour' but it's better than ever.

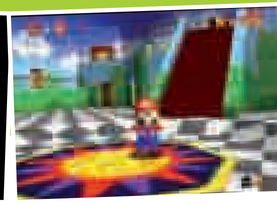
Anyway, I wanted to suggest possible feature articles for future issues of the magazine. I would love to have a more in-depth history on the Intellivision and ColecoVision machines and their associated peripherals and software sometime in the near future. Also, my favourite games for the Atari were manufactured by Activision and Imagic and I would love to know more about them, particularly Imagic as I tracked down old Intellivision and ColecoVision consoles just so I could collect the Imagic games that were released for them.

Thanks for reading and let me just say that I can't wait for Issue 21 and the Atari 2600 special in particular. That was the machine that started, and is responsible for my continuing obsession with vintage video













games to this very day! Ah, so many happy memories…
Steve Rolph via email

Thanks for the kind words Steve, and don't worry, many of the features you have mentioned are being lined up for future issues of the magazine. As to which ones they are… well; you'll just have to wait.

ARCHON ATTACK

Dear Retro Gamer,

It's great to see that the magazine is back and looking better than ever.

Anyway, I just wanted to bring to your attention a remake of the classic 8-bit classic Archon. It's taken a fair few years, but a public beta has finally been released. It's a little rough around the edges but the developers have managed to perfectly capture the playability of the original game (probably because Jon Freeman assisted them on the project). It's a shame NetPlay isn't implemented in this current release, but the two player game is as much fun as it always was. Check it out at http://www.archonevolution.com/community/forums/
Dave via email

Cheers for the heads up Dave, when it's finally completed we'll be more than happy to run it in our Home-Brew section.

AUSSIE ANSWERS

Dear Darran,

My name is Danny and I live in Australia, I have been an avid reader of your magazine since Issue 1 and understand that Imagine Publishing now publishes Retro Gamer.

Sadly, there are three things I find disappointing about the new change over.

1. I have been unable to find any new copies of Retro Gamer magazine in Australia.

2. The loss of the cover disk is a huge disappointment, could you not place the usual coverdisk contents on your web site or simply release a DVD cover disk every six months?

FROM THE FORUM

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE ASKING A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTING THE BEST (OR FUNNIEST) REPLIES. THIS MONTH, WE WANTED TO FIND OUT WHO YOUR FAVOURITE DEVELOPERS WERE. HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF

ID: Sir Clive

Mine would have to be Ocean. I know they go stuck in the rot of big money movie licenses and released one or two truly awful games, but I did get the chance to tour their offices and see behind the scenes of how games get made. Also had a good few hours in their Arcade with all the machines on Free-play.

So just for the fact that I am a Manchester lad and they were local, and because of the memories of my visit I will choose Ocean.

ID: Questor

From the old days then it'd have to be Ultimate, *Jet Pac*, *Cookie*, *Sabre Wulf* et al, absolute classics, and impossible to beat - Then they became Rare, and a bit hit and miss.

More recently (16 bit era) then probably either the Bitmap Brothers (*Chaos Engine* is one of my fave all time games, and *Speedball 2* - need I say more) or perhaps Bullfrog at their heyday, *Syndicate* was another highly original concept (If you discount the fact it was actually *Blade Runner* crossed with *Risk!*)

My overall feel is that any developer who comes up with something original and out of the ordinary will generally have a good following among gamers who know games, casual gamers might ignore them, which is why we're seeing fewer and fewer original ideas nowadays (Hello EA I'm talking to you!!)

ID: revgiblet

My favourite developer is probably Capcom. Do I need to give a reason? Yes? OK, well here are a few. *1943*, *Dungeons & Dragons Shadow over Mystara*, *LED Storm*, *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*, *Final Fight*, *Street Fighter II*, *Breath of Fire III*, *Gregory Horror Show*, *Killer 7*, *Resident Evil 4*.

I could give you more if I have to, but I really shouldn't need to.

ID: Sven

It's got to be Sierra, hands down. They were one of the studios that actually posted a lot about themselves, via magazines in the game boxes. I really felt like I got to know a lot of the people behind the games. This past couple of years I've even had email conversations with Al Lowe and Ken Williams.

They also made stunning games. With a few exceptions, I bought every game they published since *King's Quest 1* in the early Eighties to *Larry 7* in 1997, so it was a long relationship indeed.

ID: chinnyhill10

Until recently I would have said the Oliver Twins, but having recently revisited a lot of 8-bit games by the Pickfords I'm torn. They both come from an era where gameplay mattered and a few people could develop a decent game. The Olivers should be designing and writing for the DS. Many of their games had that pick up and play appeal that converts well to the DS.

ID: merman

I vote for Graftgold. Not only do you have the 8-bit years with classics like *Uridium* and *Paradroid* (not forgetting *Quazatron* for the Speccy owners), you then have 16-bit classics like *Rainbow Islands* and *Simulcra* (a forgotten classic). Such a shame they stopped working on games.

ID: Ash

It has to be Nintendo. Who else has a near flawless track record that dates back over 25 years? Think about it, from the first Game & Watch to *Nintendogs*: I can barely remember a single bad game.

ID: Ritchardo mkII

Codies - Brilliant software for the price (with some garbage chucked in to keep you on your toes!). Perfectly playable footie games (*4 Soccer Sim*), Overhead racers (*BMX Sim*, *Grand Prix Sim 2*) and their crown jewels - the arcade adventures (*Dizzy*, *Seymour* et all). The fact that the majority of their games were two player efforts makes them all the more essential in my opinion.

ID: Randall Flagg

It has to be Ashby Computer Graphics AKA Ultimate-Play The Game. They were the first people to get you to say "WOW!" when you played their isometric 3D games. Many people imitated and improved on their initial ideas but they were there before anyone else.

Even their 2D games (*Sabre Wulf*, *Underwurlde*, *Atic Atac*) had such amazing depth and playability. You just needed to complete the game and life couldn't go back to normal until you had.

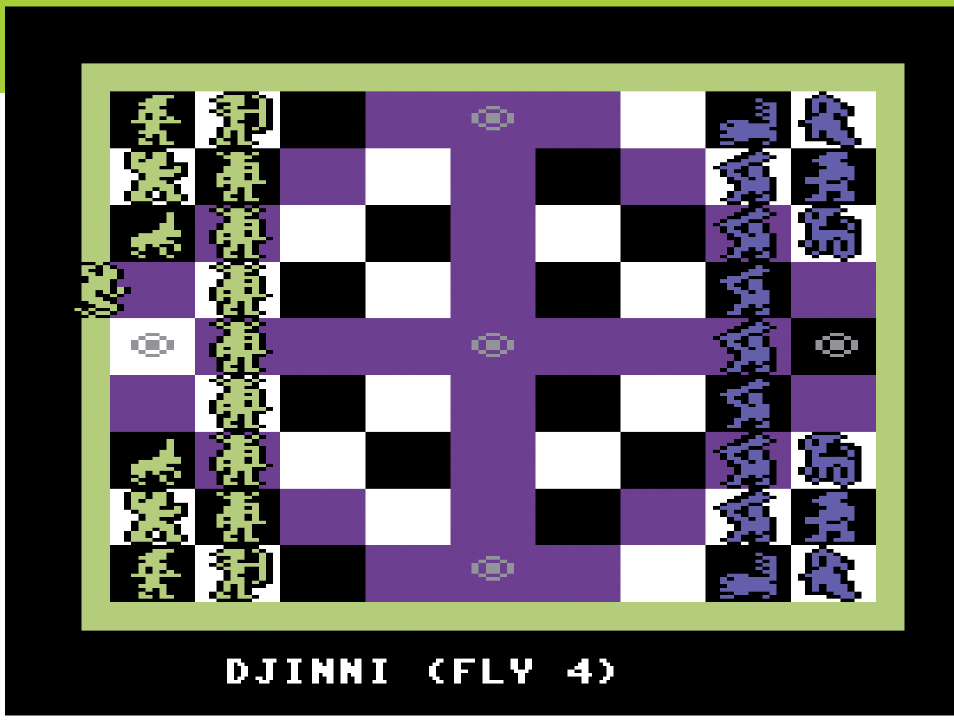
ID: Turrican

I would have to say Nintendo if I am honest because of having a great all round quality, although Team 17 and Thalamus would run a close second...

ID: frank grimes

Capcom: Beat-'em-ups a-plenty. *Street Fighter*, *Final Fight*, *Marvel Vs Capcom* etc are all great games, but there's the other stuff too. *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts*, *Duck Tales*, *Resident Evil*... Capcom are legends.

THE RETRO FORUM



3. I read in Issue 19 that you would be reviewing the GP2X in the following issue but it was nowhere to be seen.

So in light of the above I have a few questions for you. Will Retro Gamer be available in Melbourne, Australia? Will you ever put coverdisks back on the cover and why didn't you review the GP2X. Anyway, enough of my complaints keep up the great work and stay retro.

Danny McSweeney via email

Right then Danny let's answer your questions…

1) Retro Gamer is now available in Australia; it's just a case of finding someone that stocks it.

2) We won't be using coverdisks anytime soon, but that's not to say they won't appear in a future issue.

3) As for the lack of a GP2X review, well that was sadly out of our control but has now been rectified. Head on over to page 88 to read our first look.



ALL SHOOK UP

Dear Retro Gamer,

Upon entering my local Easons last week and discovering a copy of your magazine for, ashamedly, the first time, I was both shocked and disgusted.

Shocked, that a magazine of such dedication to a pastime I've been practising actually existed, and disgusted that I had never seen your fine magazine until now! In joining previous readers, I would also like to extend my congratulations to you on the fine achievement of producing a magazine of both journalistic quality and, more importantly, one that focuses on the actual games, rather than the commercial side of the industry. In my opinion too many magazines nowadays are focusing these days on the commercial aspects of games, without actually sitting down and playing them. I'm delighted to say that Retro Gamer doesn't fall into the same trap.

Once again, congratulations on a fantastic read and something I'll be looking forward to purchasing again on Feb 2nd

Wayne Madden

Rathfarnham, Dublin, Ireland

It's great to hear that you're enjoying the magazine Wayne, yet surprising that you've never seen it before now. Best to get a subscription so that the same thing doesn't happen in the future…

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FANTASY ZONE

TO BE THIS GAUDY TAKES SEGA…





- » **PUBLISHER** SEGA
- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MASTER SYSTEM
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £7+

HISTORY



Sega's Master System was a wonderful little console that always came second place to Nintendo's NES. A shame really, as it had some truly cracking arcade conversions available for it that made up in heart and gameplay what their 8-bit visuals and sound often lacked. Every now and then though a title came along that did a remarkable job of capturing the spirit of the original arcade game. *Fantasy Zone* was one such game.

One of the original cute-'em-ups, Sega's loony shooter saw you taking control of a sweet little spaceship and blasting your way through some of the brightest, weirdest looking enemies ever seen. Many of the beasties you encountered were some of the strangest aberrations to grace a videogame and provided a unique window into the (no doubt) deranged minds that thought it would make perfect sense to host all these bizarre creations in one game.

Sega was right of course. *Fantasy Zone's* bright, pastel-coloured world and crazy occupants was like no other shooter around and allowed the game to develop a cult following. While the Master System version wasn't without its faults, it was an extremely faithful port that seldom strayed from its arcade parent. The quirky music, marvellous visuals, outrageous power-ups; everything was ported with near perfect precision; even the huge bizarre bosses had made it across intact.

Sure *Fantasy Zone* was simple to play, but therein lay its charm. Each level required you to do nothing more than fly back and fourth across the gaudy landscape and take out the many purple bases dotted about each stage. Whenever an opponent was defeated it would drop behind a coin that could then be spent at the shops that floated by. Once tooled up, it was simply a case of clearing the rest of the stage's enemies and facing off against a big boss…

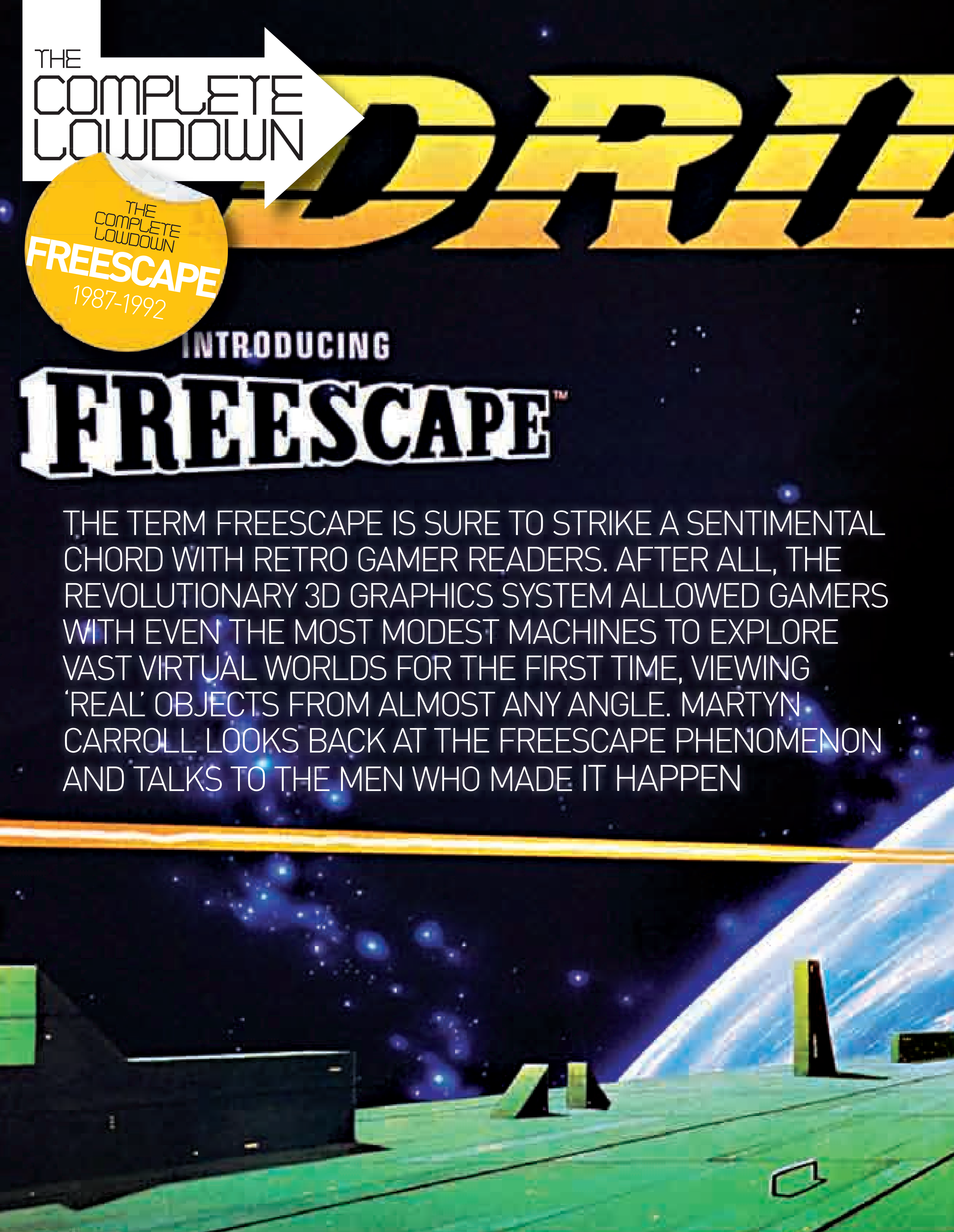
It's been superseded by superior versions (including a recent PS2 offering) but Sega's 8-bit version remains a testament to what its console could do in talented hands.



THE COMPLETE LOWDOWN

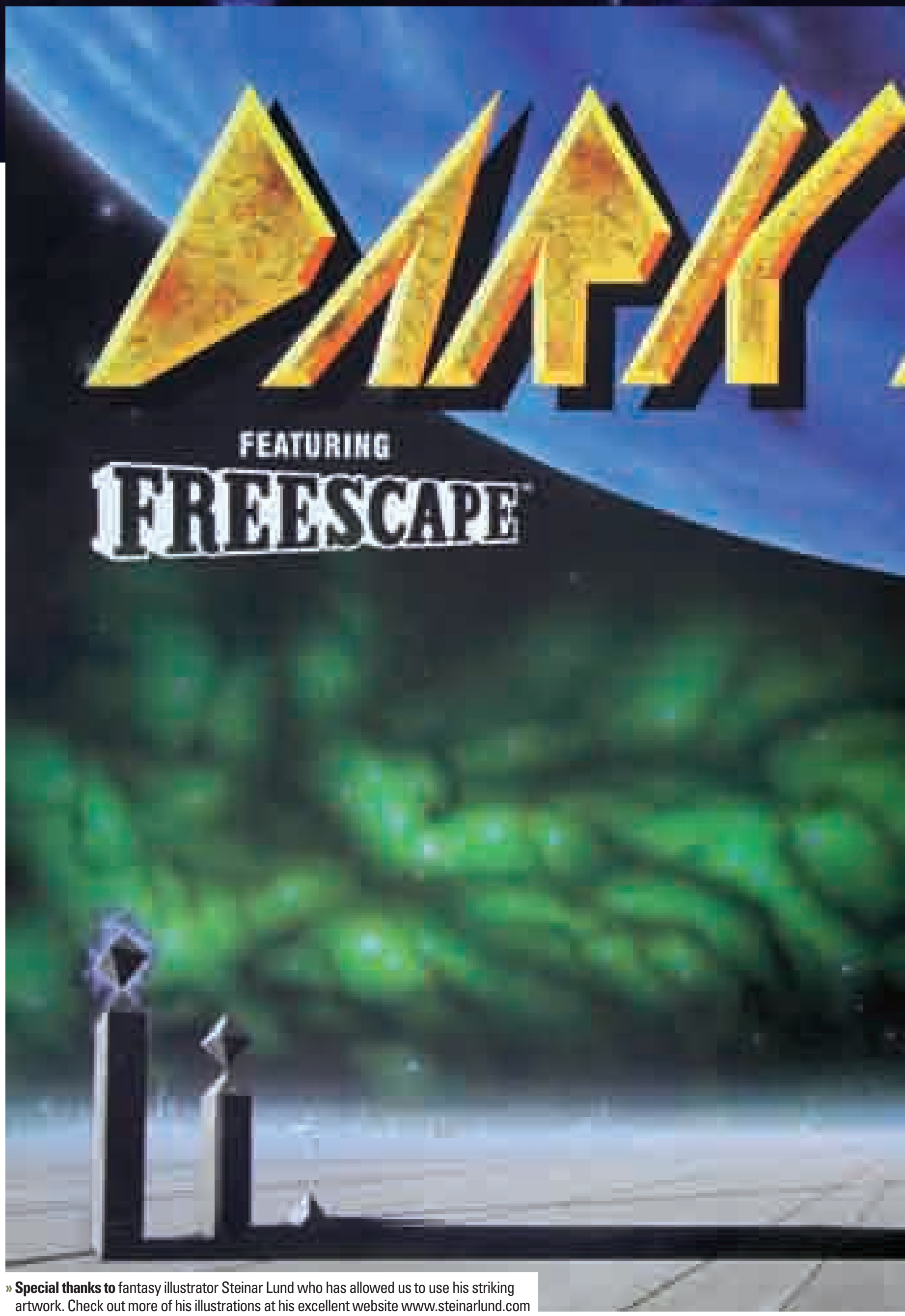
FREESCAPE

1987-1992



THE TERM FREESCAPE IS SURE TO STRIKE A SENTIMENTAL CHORD WITH RETRO GAMER READERS. AFTER ALL, THE REVOLUTIONARY 3D GRAPHICS SYSTEM ALLOWED GAMERS WITH EVEN THE MOST MODEST MACHINES TO EXPLORE VAST VIRTUAL WORLDS FOR THE FIRST TIME, VIEWING 'REAL' OBJECTS FROM ALMOST ANY ANGLE. MARTYN CARROLL LOOKS BACK AT THE FREESCAPE PHENOMENON AND TALKS TO THE MEN WHO MADE IT HAPPEN


LLER



» **Special thanks to** fantasy illustrator Steinar Lund who has allowed us to use his striking artwork. Check out more of his illustrations at his excellent website www.steinarlund.com

"TRYING TO GET A 3D ENGINE, TOGETHER WITH ALL THE GAME LOGIC AND ENVIRONMENTS, INTO JUST 48K WAS A REAL PROBLEM. IN ORDER TO SAVE SPACE, THE GEOMETRY REPRESENTATION WAS VERY HIGH LEVEL WITH RELATIVELY LOW PRECISION" SEAN ELLIS



» After 12 months of solid development, Incentive unveiled *Driller* to eager gamers at the annual PCW Show

The debut of *Driller* at London's Personal Computer World Show in September 1987 was something of an event, as gamers finally glimpsed the project that Incentive had been working on for the previous 12 months. During that time the gaming press was witness to the development of *Driller*, and duly passed on details to eager readers. The previews concentrated not so much on the game itself, but on the graphical trickery behind it.

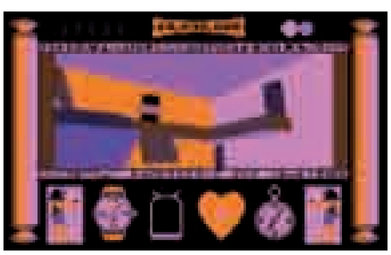
You see; *Driller* was the first game to use Freecape, Incentive's groundbreaking new software system that could render game worlds in solid 3D. Forget Quicksilva's Softsolid 3D, Ultimate's Filmation or any other trademarked technique that had gone before. Freescape was the real deal, displaying solid objects with true perspective, all viewed in the first person. 'It's just like being there!' ran the *Driller* ad.

BUILDING BLOCKS

Chris Andrew, brother of Ian Andrew, Incentive's founder, first conceived Freescape in 1985. Sean Ellis, who worked for Incentive and later ported *Driller* to the ST and Amiga, remembers its origins: "Chris was employed full time to come up with a 3D system that could be used for games. Some 3D games had already been published, most notably *Elite* for the BBC Micro, but they all used wireframe graphics. Chris realised that there was just enough power to draw solid 3D polygons, and this was his vision."

To create the system, which was originally codenamed 'Being There', Incentive formed Major Developments, an in-house design team that included Chris, programmer Stephen Northcott and graphic artist Paul Gregory. Paul reveals that Freescape was developed on an Amstrad CPC, simply because it was Chris's machine of choice. "Of all the 8-bit machines available at the time, the CPC was best positioned for development work due to its availability with a built-in disk drive," he tells us. "Plus its processing speed and graphics capabilities, at least capabilities appropriate for 3D, made it the ideal choice."

In September 1986 the team began the seemingly impossible task of creating the Freescape system. However, the problems they faced were fairly typical of the time. "Performance and memory were the bugbears of every program in that era," remembers Sean. "Trying to get a 3D engine, together with all the game logic and environments, into just 48K was a real problem. In order to save space, the geometry representation was very high level with relatively





» **Left:** the Amstrad CPC version of Total Eclipse and (**above**) the same scene from the new PC remake

TOTAL ECLIPSE REMIX

By the time you read this you'll be able to download a brand new remake of *Total Eclipse* from the Ovine by Design website (www.ovine.net). Coded by Ovine's Stuart Collier, with graphics by Trevor 'Smila' Storey and music by Paul Egginton, the game is looking to be one of the best remakes we've seen in a good while.

When we spoke to Stuart the game was 99% complete, and he broke off from testing to tell us a bit about it. "Taking the original data files, we began with an exact replica of *Total Eclipse* and then started to replace the rectangles and squares with fully textured objects. To bring it more up to date there are lots of secret rooms to find and more puzzles to solve, but we have astayed faithful to the original so that the same solution can be used."

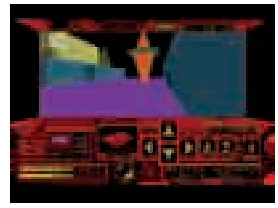
During its development, Stuart wrote a Freescape level editor, so can we expect further Freescape remakes? "*Total Eclipse* is the first, with *Driller* planned next. Others may follow, depending on the feedback we receive…"



DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN...



YOU FIRST CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF THE SPHINX?
The scenery in *Driller* was fairly basic, featuring square buildings, rectangular walls, and not much else. *Dark Side* seemed to follow the same path – until you stumbled into the Triton Sector and saw the massive sphinx! It served no useful purpose in the game – it was just a case of the developers saying, "look at some of the cool stuff we can now do…"



» The aim of *Driller* was to release the gas beneath the moon's surface, but for many gamers the urge to go off and explore was just too strong

low precision. This actually works for you in the performance stakes too, because you can choose geometric shapes that are easy to process. The inner loops – triangle filling, mainly – were optimised to within an inch of their lives. No trick was spared to get the pixel fill rate up."

Paul agrees that lack of RAM was the main problem. "Limited memory on the base level platforms required some clever tricks to encode 3D data into as small a space as possible. Complex game logic was also encoded into an efficient format (known as Freescape Control Language) to enable easy level authoring without bloating data size."

When the system was finally up and running on the CPC, the team began the daunting task of porting the code to other machines. "That was difficult," frowns Sean. "The code was in optimized assembler – not a good basis for translation. Going from, say, the Amstrad to the Spectrum wasn't too bad, because at least they were both Z80-based machines. The nastiest platform to port to was the Commodore 64."

"That showed in the port!" laughs Paul. "The relatively weak main processor on the C64 was a real problem. While various co-processors complemented it, none of them were particularly useful for 3D, so it was up to the main processor to do the grunt work. And it struggled."

If *Driller* was sluggish on the Amstrad and Spectrum, it was positively stone dead on the Commodore. Still, at least C64 owners had an excellent tune to hum along to, as they appeared to wade through treacle. Much more sprightly were the ST and Amiga versions, which Sean ported in 1988. "The ST and Amiga had lovely things like 16-color screens, 32-bit arithmetic in single instructions, and huge amounts of memory," he enthuses. "The data was left in the same format as before, so we had an enormous amount of RAM left over to play with. This allowed us to do things like have better dashboard graphics, sampled sounds, and also to use more memory-intensive algorithms to trade size for more speed."

DRILLER THRILLER

Months before the 16-bit versions appeared, *Driller* was released for the CPC, C64 and Spectrum in time for Christmas 1987. Priced at £14.95 (cassette) or £17.95 (disk), the game was expensive, but for that princely sum you received a big glossy box containing



» Little known fact. The deadly laser gun in *Dark Side*, Zephyr One, was named after Incentive's Berkshire office address



» In *Total Eclipse*, the action shifted from the sub-zero temperatures of outer space to the searing heat of the Sahara Desert






» Port to port. **Clockwise:** *Driller* on the Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64 and Amiga

IF YOU PLAY ONE FREESCAPE GAME... PLAY THIS...



CASTLE MASTER ON THE AMIGA
Featuring a funny intro sequence (that immediately casts aside any lofty pretensions), great in-game music, and some much-needed animation (even if the castle spirits do look like a fat version of Baron von Bubbla from *Bubble Bobble*), this is the best version of the most accomplished Freescape game.

the game, a 32-page scene-setting novella and a funny cardboard thing which, for mapping purposes, could be folded into a 3D model of Miteral, the barren moon on which *Driller* was set. Reviews of the game were unanimously positive, and the hype translated into strong sales. "I never read a negative review – it was universally praised," says Sean. "In retrospect, the gameplay was not as strong as the later Freescape offerings, but it had a unique visual feel."

Sean's analysis is spot on. Looking back now, *Driller* plays more like a technical demo, showcasing the Freescape system but offering very little in the way of gameplay. Your mission was to save Miteral by releasing a dangerous gas that had built up beneath the surface, but the presence of ambiguous puzzles and annoying defence beacons (that continually zapped you in certain sectors) meant that many gamers would simply explore Miteral instead, wowing at the incredible graphics and worrying very little about the moon's impending fate.

"IN RETROSPECT, THE GAMEPLAY WAS NOT AS STRONG AS THE LATER FREESCAPE OFFERINGS, BUT IT HAD A UNIQUE VISUAL FEEL" SEAN ELLIS

It made sense then that now the Freescape system was up and running, the team could concentrate on designing new games with more depth. The results were *Dark Side* and *Total Eclipse*, both released in 1988. "With each subsequent game the engine was enhanced with new features," says Paul. "The Freescape Control Language was improved to allow more complex and compelling gameplay, and our understanding of the genre grew to enable more complex and interactive puzzles."

"Absolutely," agrees Sean. "We were doing two things during this time. First, we were learning what worked well with the system, and second, we were optimising the system so we could put more things in."

Further tweaks were made to fine-tune the core engine, with each subsequent game benefiting from a small (around 5%) speed increase. "It was a simple learning curve," says Sean. "The optimisations came from several different directions. The initial 16-bit ports had a new collision detection routine, which was then ported back to the 8-bit versions. There were improvements to the object transformation and sorting algorithms (sorting was probably the thing that evolved the most as the Freescape engine was developed over the years). We also began to develop different strategies for increasing the pixel fill rate on specific platforms."

SUPER FREESCAPE

Having completed work on the ST and Amiga port of *Dark Side*, Sean started work on a new and improved 3D game engine, leaving Paul to complete the 16-bit ports of Total Eclipse and the next Freescape game, *Castle Master*. Sean's system eventually became known as Superscape and was used to build serious software applications. "The Superscape system was, conceptually, a direct descendant of the Freescape system," he reveals, "but with more flexible geometry, larger scene sizes, and more colours."

These days Incentive is known as Superscape and is a leading publisher of 3D mobile games. "We have now come full circle," smiles Sean, "where we are developing engines for mobile phones, where lack of processing power and memory are once again the main problems facing developers. I knew those old skills would come in handy again some day!"

So the proud legacy of Freescape can still be seen today, but how important was the system in the grand scheme of gaming? Where does it sit on the timeline of important 3D titles? "I'd say somewhere between *Elite* and *Wolfenstein*", reflects Sean. "We bridged that gap. At the time, Freescape was at the technical pinnacle of 8-bit computing."

"It was the first solid 3D game system to offer a truly immersive experience," adds Paul. "Around the same time some other companies were bringing out simple solid 3D games based around a 'space' theme, which is much easier to do than first person. So I guess it was partly responsible for introduction of the first person 3D game genre."

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

In 1991 Freescape fans were given the chance to create their very own 3D games, thanks to the release of the *3D Construction Kit* (aka *3D Virtual Studio*). Whereas Ian Andrew and his team had to painstakingly feed their custom game editors with raw hex code, budding developers could use the kit's icon-driven environment editor to build a virtual world, piece by piece. And when all the objects were in place, you could fire up the condition editor and use its simplified BASIC-style language to add logic to your game. It was amazingly easy to use, considering the complexity of the Freescape system, and while you wouldn't be making games in minutes, a few hours work would deliver some very pleasing results.



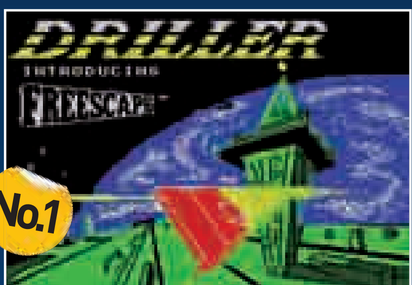
FREESCAPE FAMILY TREE

DRILLER

System: Spectrum, C64, CPC, Amiga, ST, PC
• **Year Released:** 1987

The first Freescape game was set on Miteral, a desolate moon that orbits Evarth. After years of mining by exiled Evarthlings known as Ketars, critical levels of gas have built up beneath the surface, threatening to destroy the moon, with disastrous consequences for Evarth. Your job was to visit each of the moon's 18 sectors and release the gas using a strange teleporting drill.

Driller caused a sensation when released, with its amazing 3D world offering a tantalising glimpse into the future of gaming. However, thanks to its vague puzzles and generally slow pace, looking back it is probably the most inaccessible of all the Freescape adventures. Bizarrely, this rather stolid game was released in the US as *Space Station Oblivion*!



DARK SIDE

System: Spectrum, C64, CPC, Amiga, ST, PC
• **Year Released:** 1988

This direct sequel to *Driller* takes place 200 years after the events of the first game. This time those pesky Ketars have built a big laser gun on Evarth's second moon Tricuspid, and they're planning to use it to blow up the mother planet. However, you can prevent the gun from charging up by destroying the energy collection towers located on the light side of the moon.

Released just six months after *Driller, Dark Side* was a more rounded game, mixing arcade, adventure and strategy elements to much better effect. Crucially, your character came equipped with a jetpack, meaning you could soar into the sky right from the start (instead of having to locate the reconnaissance jet, like you did in *Driller*). A very fine follow-up.



TOTAL ECLIPSE

System: Spectrum, C64, CPC, Amiga, ST, PC
• **Year Released:** 1988

Appearing mere months after *Dark Side, Total Eclipse* wisely forwent the space setting in favour of a more grounded affair. Talking place in 1930's Egypt, you had to enter one of the great pyramids and destroy the shrine of an angry sun god, thereby exorcising a curse that will unleash devastation during an eclipse due to take place in two hours time!

Swapping the wide open spaces of the first two games with a series of claustrophobic chambers was a very good move, resulting in a heightened degree of atmosphere. The only problem was that the layout of the pyramid was deliberately confusing, so unless you were prepared to draw a detailed map, you'd end up going around and around in circles while the seconds slipped away.



TOTAL ECLIPSE II: THE SPHINX JINX

System: Spectrum, C64, CPC
• **Year Released:** 1989

Created exclusively for the Home Computer Club (and bundled with the original game), *The Sphinx Jinx* was not a fully blown sequel but a reworking of *Total Eclipse* sharing many of the same locations. Having defeated the sun god in the first game, you had to annul the curse completely by finding 12 parts of a sphinx statue hidden within the pyramid. And this time you only had one hour to complete the task!

The Sphinx Jinx was an excellent companion piece to *Total Eclipse*, and thanks to a number of brand new puzzles, it could be enjoyed even if you'd completed the original. The game was never made available on general release, although it did appear as a freebie on various magazine cover-tapes in 1992.



CASTLE MASTER

System: Spectrum, C64, CPC, Amiga, ST, PC
• **Year Released:** 1990

The fifth Freescape game was the most ambitious to date, with more locations, traps and puzzles than ever before. To counter criticism that Incentive had a Freescape production line in place running at full steam, the in-house team developed Freescape+, a modified version of the 3D engine that was faster, smoother and generally more versatile. It also features a new action button, which you could use to eat and drink, push objects, pick things up etc. The days of shooting everything to see if something happened were thankfully over.

Choosing to play as either a prince or princess, you had to enter the dreaded Castle Eternity and rescue your kidnapped twin from the hands of a mad wizard called Magister. The two characters had subtly different paths through the game, making this the best Freescape adventure of all.

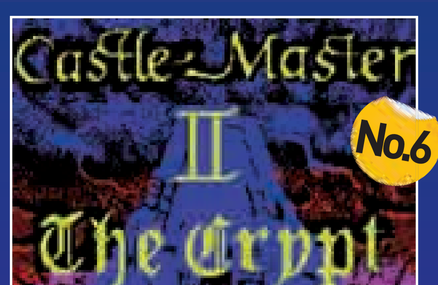


CASTLE MASTER II: THE CRYPT

System: Spectrum, C64, CPC, Amiga, ST, PC
• **Year Released:** 1990

Like *Total Eclipse II, The Crypt* was a straightforward spin on the original *Castle Master*. Having freed your twin in the first game, Magister banished you to a crypt deep beneath the castle. You simply had to escape from the castle in order to complete the game. It sounds easy, but there were plenty of tricky elements that got in the way.

The Crypt made its debut on Domark's *Virtual Worlds* collection, along with *Driller, Total Eclipse* and *Castle Master* (*Dark Side* was strangely absent). Thanks to some very fiendish puzzles that could have you swearing in frustration, the sequel wasn't as accessible as the original game, but was perfect fare for the Freescape veterans who'd been hooked since the very beginning.



CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

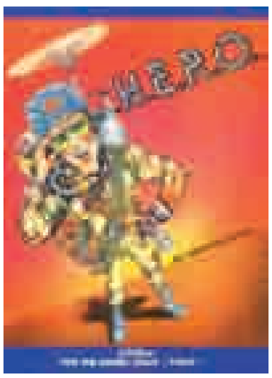
CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learned about retrogaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you actually want it to. Granted a mint copy of Radiant Silvergun is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can picked up for less than a fiver. This month's its John Van Ryzin's wonderful H.E.R.O.. It's cheaper than the latest A-Ha album and sounds a damn sight better.

H.E.R.O.

- » **SYSTEM:** ATARI 2600/7800
- » **RELEASED:** 1984
- » **PUBLISHER:** ACTIVISION
- » **DEVELOPER:** JOHN VAN RYZIN



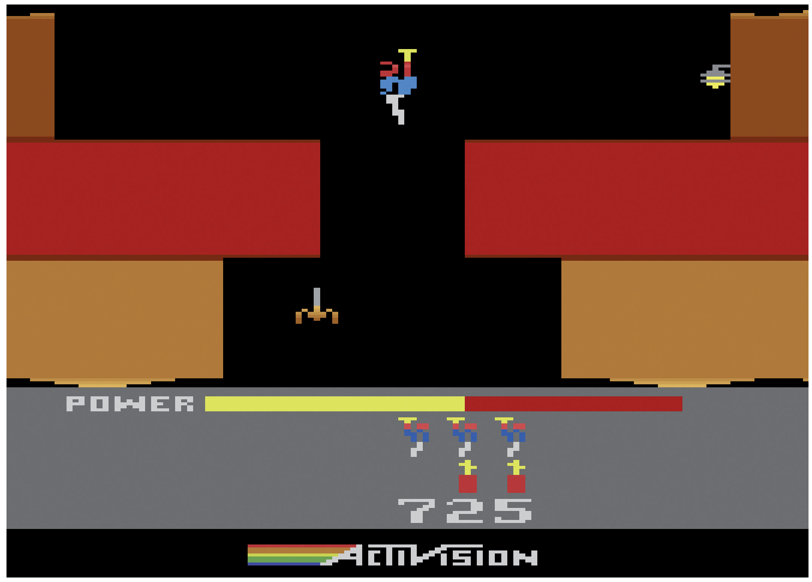
When I was a nipper, five quid was a lot of money—a king's ransom, to be aspired to, only achievable by painstakingly saving up pocket money and earnings from odd jobs. These days, a fiver barely buys you a couple of pints, or two thirds of a movie ticket, yet it's still enough to grab yourself a copy of a magical gem from yesteryear to keep you utterly engaged for far longer than a Guinness or 105 minutes of the most recent Harry Potter flick. The utterly compelling Atari 2600 classic *H.E.R.O.* is one such diamond.

I could tell you that loading *H.E.R.O.* brings nostalgic memories flooding back, the likes of which I haven't felt since first playing the game many years ago, but that would be a flat-out lie. And the reason for this is that the game is one that I've constantly returned to in various forms over the years—Atari 2600, Commodore 64, Colecovision, GBA (via emulation), and now, full circle, back on the Atari 2600 once again.

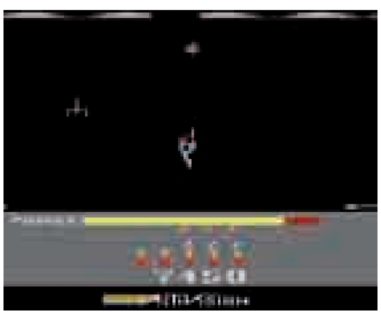
The game's premise is that a volcano has inconsiderately erupted above a mine, causing a number of miners to become trapped. Your job is to guide Rod Hero (R. Hero—geddit?), part of the Helicopter Emergency Rescue Operation, to the trapped miners. Armed with a trusty 'helicopter prop-pack', a few sticks of dynamite (to blast away numerous pesky blocked passageways), and a micro-laser helmet, Rod carefully works his way ever deeper into the mines. Each level finds the paths becoming progressively complex, and increasingly infested with numerous beasties. Huge snakes dart forth from cavern walls, and enormous spiders and moths erratically bound around—just a single touch brings instant death. Although Rod didn't think to bring a giant can of bug killer in addition to the dynamite, his trusty laser helmet makes short work of the nasties, and it also provides another means of destroying the molten lava walls that block various passageways, which otherwise present another way for Rod to instantly kill himself, should everything get a bit too much for him. And when a lone, dispirited miner is finally reached, he shows his appreciation by, erm, raising his arm a bit (well, he's probably very tired and dehydrated), and Rod is instantly transported to the top of the next, more difficult mine.

It's not hard to put my finger on why I find *H.E.R.O.* such a great game. It's not the graphics (which are clean and simple, if unremarkable), and the chunky sound effects aren't anything to shout about either. Where *H.E.R.O.* shone in its day and continues to shine is in its perfectly balanced gameplay. The controls are responsive, yet weighty—the jetpack takes a short while to respond, making the game more of a challenge than it otherwise would be. The rapidly diminishing air supply brings an added dimension to the game, meaning you can't hang around, and features such as fragile lamps that are easily extinguished, small rafts and crushing walls are slowly introduced to maintain interest levels. Even when you think you've mastered the game, it drags you back for 'one more go', perhaps to see how far you can get on a single life, or how quickly you can defeat all its levels.

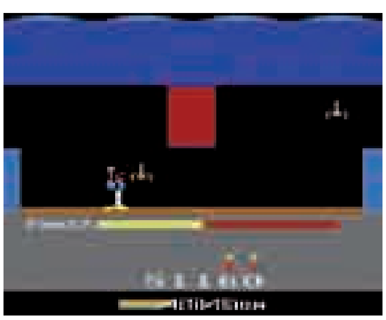
Even in the mid 1980s, this game was good value for money, and at under a fiver today, it's significantly more rewarding and better value than watching an hour and a half of a boy wizard thwarting his mortal enemy once again.



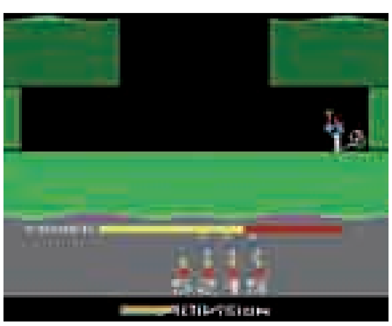
» Hovering precariously above a crushing lava wall, Rod pondered that he clearly wasn't being paid well enough for this gig



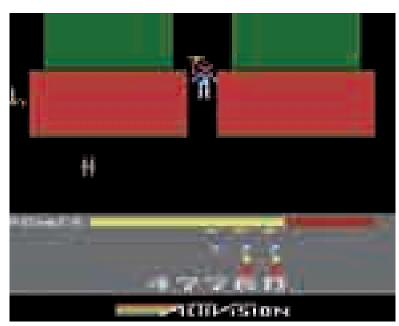
» Who turned out the lights? Rod makes a mental note not to smash any more hanging lamps



» It was during times like this when Rod wished he could swap places with the surfer from California Games



» Having risked life and limb to save him, Rod wasn't impressed when the miner gave him the finger



» Rod Hero, having been carelessly flown into a lava wall, stares forlornly out of the screen, asking "Why?"

THE MAKING OF...



SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD

With a sequel to Hit the Road well on its way Ashley Day thought it was high time to track down Steve Purcell, the creator of Sam & Max, and speak to him about the making of one of the funniest graphic adventures of all time.









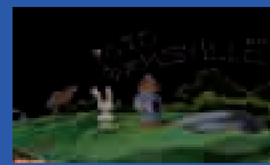




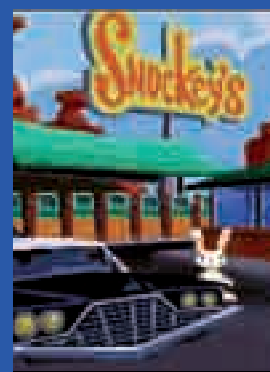


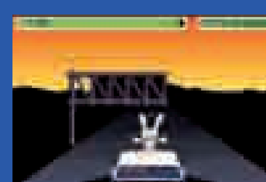
» Who would have thought a game starring a psychotic bunny and a sleuthing dog would be so popular?

IN THE KNOW

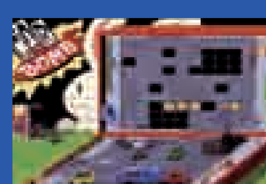


- » **PUBLISHER:** LUCASARTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** LUCASARTS
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **GENRE:** GRAPHIC ADVENTURE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5-£25





» One of *Hit the Road's* many over-the-top mini games.



» *Battleships* but with much more cultural relevance to kids of the '90s.

"MAX WAS A COMPLETELY NAKED BUNNY RABBIT WITH A SET OF TEETH THAT WOULD PUT JAWS TO SHAME"

Great double acts are commonplace in the world of film, television and comedy but videogames have very few duos that stick out and, as far as we're concerned, there's only one such pairing that are worth mentioning...and we don't mean *Firo & Klawd*. Whether they were gracing the pages of a comic book, the television screen or a PC monitor, *Sam & Max* was the strangest of teams. With his trademark suit and dry wit Sam was a typical gumshoe, except, of course, he was a floppy eared dog. Whilst his sidekick Max was a completely naked bunny rabbit with a set of teeth that would put Jaws to shame. The pair starred in LucasArts' *Sam & Max Hit the Road*: yet another hilarious adventure game in which the two 'hit the road' in search of a missing Yeti. Along the way they found themselves visiting some bizarre tourist hotspots like the world's biggest ball of twine and an alligator-infested crazy golf course. The game was both a showcase for the madcap title characters as well as a parody of America's more weird and wonderful tourist sights.

The 1987 comic "Monkeys Violating the Heavenly Temple" was the first appearance of Sam & Max, courtesy of creator Steve Purcell. "My brother made up a pair of characters called *Sam & Max* when he was a Kid," recalls Steve. "My version grew out of my own cruel parodies of his comic books. At some point he lost interest and I continued drawing them. Over the years, *The Blues Brothers* and *Penn and Teller* have also had an influence on *Sam & Max* and one of our family cars was a dead ringer for *Sam & Max's* 60's patrol car." The comic soon gained a strong cult following and eventually grabbed the attention of a few employees at LucasArts. "Ken Macklin, an artist at what was then called LucasFilm Games recommended me (based on my first Sam & Max comic) to the Art Director Gary Winnick." I started on a role-playing game that was cancelled shortly after I was hired and found myself without a job. Fortunately, they hired me back to paint the *Zak McKraken* box cover. After that I animated on *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Working at a game company on Skywalker Ranch was like going away to Geek Summer Camp. It was great."

It was only a matter of time until *Sam & Max* were transported from the comic page to the computer screen. LucasArts had been churning out ever more amusing games (most notably *The Secret of Monkey Island*) and Purcell's wisecracking duo were perfect for the relaxed pace of the genre. "The way *Sam & Max* work best is that you need to spend time with them as characters. You get used to the way they interact with each other the way you do with a friend when you come to speaking a common language of references and shorthand." In 1992 LucasArts set about creating a *Sam & Max* adventure and with only seven and a half months until release Purcell and the team needed to get a story in place incredibly



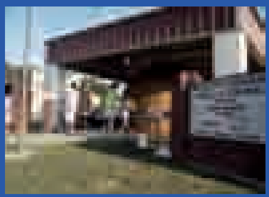
» The only "white knuckle" adventure ever made?

THE MAKING OF... SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD





» George sacks another LucasArts designer for daring to suggest *Grim Fandango 2*



ROADSIDE AMERICANA

British gamers may have seen *Sam & Max's* bizarre tourist attractions as the surreal imaginings of the LucasArts designers but our American cousins will have recognised them for the parodies of real American landmarks that they are. From Shoe Trees to Miniscule Churches, there's a whole world of weird along America's highways that had an influence on *Hit the Road*. The most notable of which is the World's Largest Ball of Twine. Measuring over 7 million feet in length, the giant ball of twine has been diligently wound by the citizens of Cawker City, Kansas for the past fifty-three years. Though miniscule in comparison to Sam & Max's ball of twine, which according to the game would reach to Jupiter if laid out end to end, Cawker City's spectacular ball is a great example of the insane America that Purcell wanted to capture in *Hit the Road*.

> "WORKING AT A GAME COMPANY ON SKYWALKER RANCH WAS LIKE GOING AWAY TO GEEK SUMMER CAMP"

quickly. "We employed storyboarding for the first time at LucasArts, mostly because we needed to plan ahead to keep everyone busy." says Purcell, who came up with the story by adapting the comics and incorporating events from his own life. "I love the book Roadside America, which is a hilarious travelogue of America's goofiest tourist stops. My childhood road trips across the US with my family also helped inspire my second comic as well as *Hit the Road*."

The *Sam & Max* comics were quite adult in tone and there was always the possibility that LucasArts would want to cut back some of the edgier material for the game but Purcell was very pleased with how much they allowed him to stick to his original vision. "I think the game is really close to the spirit of the comics. There's violence, mild cursing and a commendable lack of respect for authority not to mention circus freaks and yetis. There's less gunplay in the game simply because a gun is a terrible object to give someone to use in an adventure game unless you carefully guide the player to use it in a more interesting way. I don't remember anything getting cut by management. Much to their credit, I think they trusted our judgement."

With the story in place, and relatively un-meddled with, it was time to carve the narrative into an enjoyable video game. With the aid of fellow game designers Sean Clark, Michael Stemmle and Collette Michaud, who had all previously worked on *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, Purcell was charged with the difficult task of creating a game that got the balance between story and puzzling just right. "You try to be aware of the amount of time you have players sitting and watching as opposed to interacting. Fortunately a lot of the humour came out of the way that the characters would respond to the player's actions. Even observing something in the room could produce a funny response in which case the interactivity IS doing the work of the story."

Not content with merely weaving humour into a series of puzzles the *Sam & Max* team decided that the SCUMM engine, which had powered all of Lucasarts' adventure games since *Maniac Mansion* in 1987, was due for a spring clean. A single mouse pointer, the function of which could be cycled through by clicking the right mouse button, replaced the traditional method of selecting a verb from the bottom of the screen then clicking on an item and/or location. This freed up screen space to expand on the excellent backgrounds and also made interaction much quicker and less laborious than previous games. In Purcell's opinion as a writer there were other advantages to the loss of verb lists and dialogue trees. "It may have been Mike Stemmle who first proposed the icon based interface. I think it's great for a game that's driven by a lot of verbal gags. Nothing would kill a joke worse than reading it before you hear it."

By this stage the game could have been considered complete and ready to roll out to players but Purcell still had a couple of innovations up his sleeve. LucasArts was very aware that difficulty peaks in the puzzles meant that adventure games could often "bottle neck", leaving players with nothing to do if they were stuck. To alleviate the staccato pace of the adventure Purcell added several mini games to Hit the Road, such as Car Bomb: a suitably dark version of battleships. "They were meant so that when you were tired of trying to solve obscure puzzles you could take a break and play something short and silly", explains Purcell, "I liked having a grab bag of content so you could jump from thing one to another and try something different."

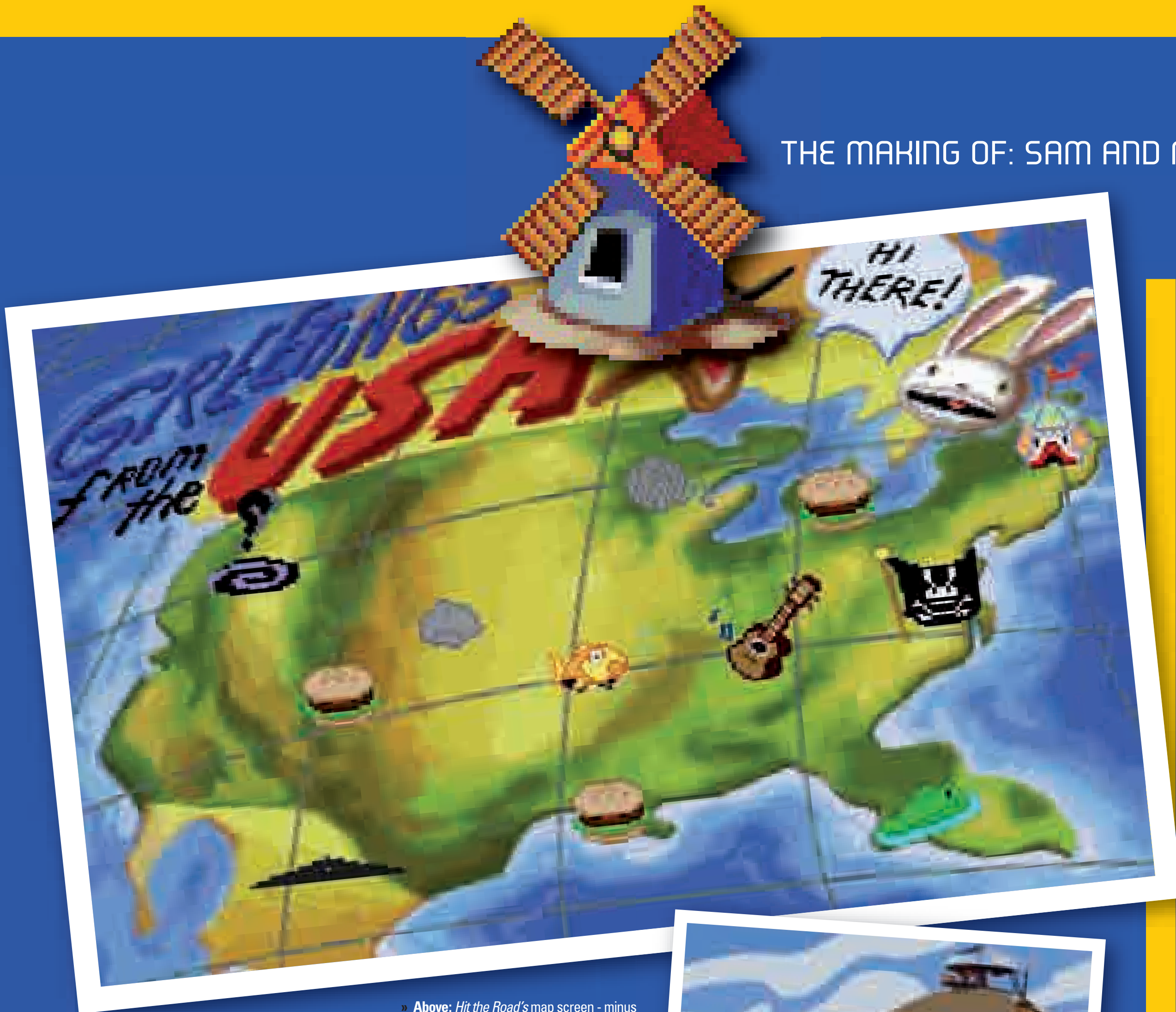
As well as the floppy disk version, *Sam & Max Hit the Road* was due to be released on CD-ROM and, as such, was to be one of the first adventures to feature a full speech soundtrack. For Steve Purcell this was a dream opportunity to hear his creations'



» Why did none of the humans question Sam n Max's animal appearance?



» Quite possibly the strangest version of Crazy Golf you'll ever play…





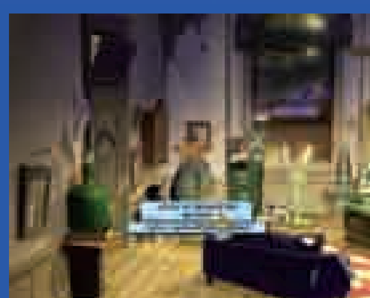
» **Above:** *Hit the Road's* map screen - minus the sound of screeching tyres. **Right:** We hope they have good fire insurance.

voices for the first time. "I always thought of Donald Sutherland as *Sam*. He sounds big and intelligent but with a bit of a lisp that gives him sincerity. Although Bill Farmer sounds nothing like Donald Sutherland I liked his demo tape because it was very dry. He wasn't trying too hard to sell the lines and he made me laugh. I call his *Sam*; Johnny Carson crossed with Jack Webb, two people that a lot of your audience have probably never heard of." For the record, Johnny Carson was the original presenter of the Tonight Show and Jack Webb starred in the TV police drama Dragnet.

By the time of its release, in early 1993, *Sam & Max* had two hysterical central characters, an innovative interface, exciting speech and a strong backbone of traditionally obscure puzzles. LucasArts' latest classic was incredibly popular with adventure fans and, no doubt due to Purcell's likeable characters, had some crossover success with those who wouldn't normally buy a "point 'n' click" game. "I'm probably still not allowed to reveal sales figures but over the years it's sold much better than any of the marketing projections. I remember a lot of people seemed to appreciate the weirdness of it when it came out but others were confused, thinking it was meant to be a cutesy kid's game. *Hit the Road* won some awards that year and was on Entertainment Weekly's Top Ten list for best software."

Sam & Max certainly stood out from the other LucasArts adventures. No other title had let you control two characters at once and, although some of the older games were amusing, every single line of dialogue was outrageously funny. Purcell has his own thoughts on why *Hit the Road* stood out from its stable mates: "I think it has the impression of being edgier and meaner, because of the language and aggressiveness of the characters, but as with the characters themselves it's mostly bluster. Most of the violence and aggression is here-say, not really played out."

The game's popularity has stayed strong for the last thirteen years. Re-releases have kept *Hit the Road* on the shelves and ScummVM (the best emulator ever made?) has opened up virtually every platform to the charms of *Sam & Max*. Purcell couldn't be happier that his game is still being enjoyed despite advancements in technology. "I'm always amazed that people are still playing Sam & Max after all these years. I know that it's been fan-ported to PSP as well and I'm told the old graphics look great on that little screen. I meet grown people who first played *Sam & Max* when they were little kids and still take time to revisit it or share it with their friends. Sort of makes it all worthwhile."

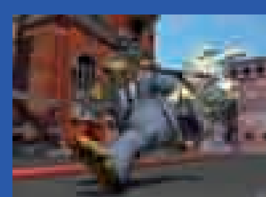


OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES:
Sam & Max Freelance Police (PC, Cancelled)
Sam & Max (PC, 2007)



THE REUNION TOUR

After LucasArts announced *Sam & Max: Freelance Police* in 2004 and scrapped it again just as quickly you would be forgiven for believing that everyone's favourite dog and rabbity-thing would never return to our screens again. Not so! When the rights to the characters reverted back to Steve Purcell in 2005 he, and several ex-LucasArts staff, hooked up with Telltale Games to create a brand new *Sam & Max* adventure. Though its unclear if Telltale's version will be the cancelled *Freelance Police* or a brand new story it is reassuring to know that Purcell and Co are on the case and that news of the adventure game's death have been greatly exaggerated. Telltale has previously worked on some of the popular *CSI* games as well as the episodic *Bone* games. As such, our own wild speculation suggests that the new *Sam & Max* game may well be a downloadable episodic game with a story that evolves over several months. We'll have to wait until 2007 to find out. While enduring the long and painful wait until then we'll be sure to check out Steve's new, and free, *Sam & Max* web comic that can be found at www.telltalegames.com along with all the latest news on the new game.

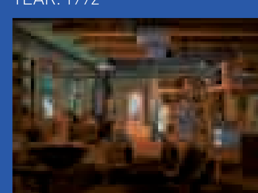


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

MANIAC MANSION
SYSTEMS: PC, APPLE II, AMIGA, COMMODORE 64, NES, FAMICOM
YEAR:

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
SYSTEMS: PC, AMIGA, MAC, SEGA CD
YEAR: 1990

INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS
SYSTEMS: PC, AMIGA, MAC
YEAR: 1992



Whatever happened to...

SONIC X-TREME

SEGA FANS SHOULD BE AWARE OF SONIC X-TREME, AND HOW IT WAS INTENDED TO BE A BREAKTHROUGH 32-BIT TITLE FOR SEGA'S MASCOT. SADLY, THE PROBLEMS THAT STILL PLAGUE THE GAME SIMPLY DEFY BELIEF. RETRO GAMER TRIES TO PROVIDE A COHERENT, THOUGH BRIEF, EXPLANATION OF THE EXTREME TURMOIL.

NEED TO KNOW

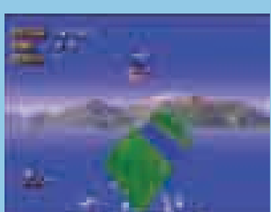
SYSYEM:
32X, UNRELEASED 32-BIT CARTRIDGE SYSTEM, SEGA SATURN, PC

DEVELOPER:
SEGA TECHNICAL INSTITUTE (AMERICAN SUB-DIVISION OF SEGA)

START OF DEVELOPMENT:
LATE 1994

DATE OF CANCELLATION:
AROUND AUGUST 1996

VERSION PLAYED BY RG:
NOT ACQUIRED, THOUGH "SONIC J.G. 7.18" DEMO WAS EXPLAINED IN-DEPTH.



» If only *Sonic Xtreme* had actually been released. It might have made quite a difference to Sega's Saturn…



» Original hand drawn concept art for the cover.

Hearing the full and ridiculously convoluted history of *Sonic X-Treme* – there's enough content to fill an entire book! – reveals a lot about the bungling internal politics of Sega and also why it was sadly on the slow road to ruin during the '90s. It also seems as if fate was determined for *Sonic X-Treme* to fail. The game switched hardware platforms no less than three times, multiple differing versions were being simultaneously developed, Yuji Naka himself appeared to loathe the project, Chris Coffin nearly died, and key figure Chris Senn (art director, co-lead designer, conceptual music) also became ill and nearly died. We managed to contact Senn, and he concisely summed up the doomed project, "Anything that could have gone wrong did. Inexperience, politics, poor communication, ego, company decisions and just plain bad luck were the reasons *X-Treme* failed."

In late 1994, the early tremors of development began on a project then known as *Sonic 32X* (it would undergo several name changes). By summer 1995 the executive producer on the game, Michael Kosaka, resigned, thereby leaving the project without a helmsman and short-staffed. Later that summer, there was a shake up with another executive producer being replaced, and Mike Wallis promoted to producer. Around Autumn '95 the project changed platforms to Sega of America's 32-bit vapourware cartridge based console, meant as a rival to the N64. The team, consisting of over a dozen members, were given no technical documents or development kits, yet struggled on. Soon after this Sega scrapped the cartridge project, deciding to focus instead on the Saturn. Poor project and staff organisation resulted in work grinding to a near halt, with the team being unable to function properly.

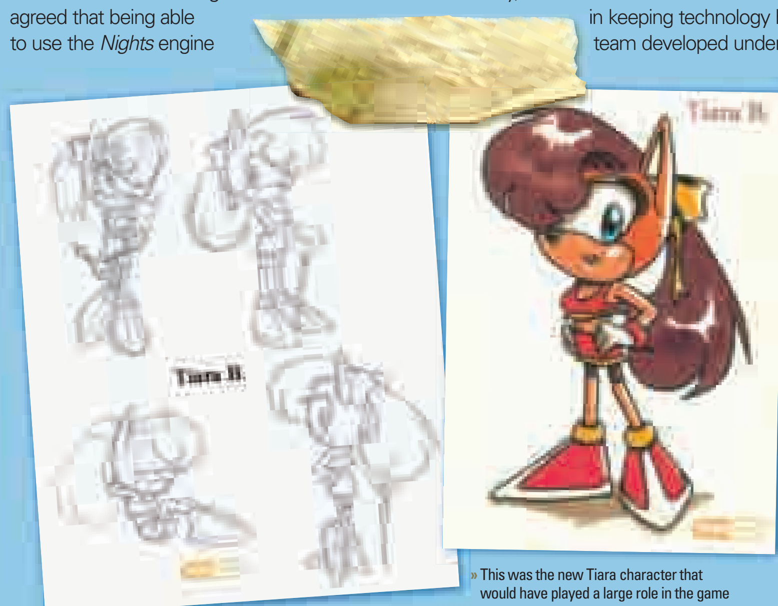
With the jump to 1996, the team was divided in order to work on separate game sections using different engines (one being boss sections with Coffin's "fisheye lens" engine). This is where confusion ensues, since there was never one single progressing version of *Sonic X-Treme*, for even one platform. There was a myriad of variations, rolling demos, prototype concepts, etc for both the Saturn and PC. New builds would also be burnt on a weekly basis, which is why providing screenshots is so excruciatingly



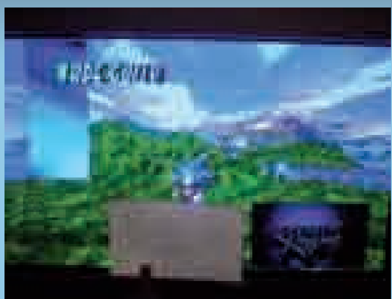
» That sure looks like *Nights* to us, *Sonic Xtreme* could have been superb

difficult. Over time the project started to fragment, made worse with the head of Sega Japan demanding a change of engine mid-development, to exclusively use Coffin's boss engine throughout. Mike Wallis took control of the group in order to try and get things finished by Christmas. In April '96 the recently appointed Bernie Stolar asked what needed to be done to make things easier. The team agreed that being able to use the *Nights* engine would speed things up and save the project.

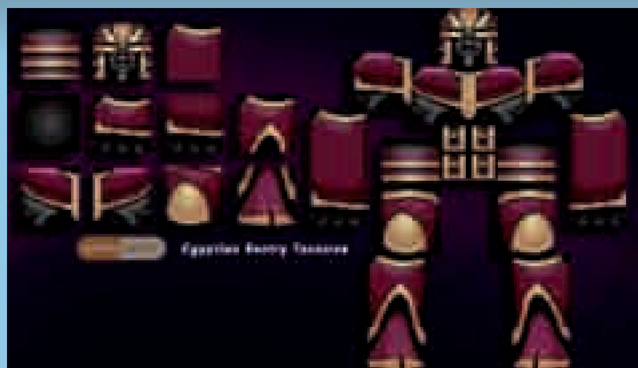
Stolar provided the needed tools and source code, and the team spent two weeks working on creating *Sonic X-Treme* with this new *Nights* engine, at which point Stolar told the team to scrap the project since Yuji Naka had threatened to resign if they continued using it. Chris Senn talks briefly about this, "Personally, I can understand Naka's interest in keeping technology his team developed under



» This was the new Tiara character that would have played a large role in the game



» The infamous "BUY ME" image, that accompanied the auction. Along with other proof, it helped convince people to part with several thousand dollars.



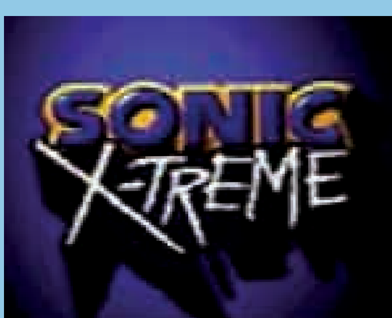


» **Above left and right:** Here we see concept art for a boss in the Red Sands level, the Guardian Sphinx.

tight control. Sonic was a franchise he clearly felt should be handled solely by Sonic Team – at least with major Sonic titles. He must have felt very strongly about it if he was willing to even threaten to quit."

The team had to push on though, and began working longer days in order to finalise the game under another engine. Chris Senn and Ofer Alon became a driving force behind part of the project, with Ofer investing upwards of 15 hours a day, 7 days a week working on the game editor. As Senn explains, "While most of the team was working to complete *X-Treme*, one method of which was to use the *Nights* engine, Ofer Alon and I were continuing to develop our own version of the game using Ofer's in-game editor. These were two completely different groups and games, both targeted at being *Sonic X-Treme*." They eventually went on to develop a PC version separate from the rest of the team who later, based on people's statements, were using older Saturn versions of Ofer's and Coffin's different engines. According to these different accounts, everyone was quite literally off doing their own thing.

From here, finding the facts again becomes difficult, since both people named Chris, Coffin and Senn, became very ill due to overwork. Chris Senn in interviews has explained how the workload and stress he put himself under resulted in hospitalisation, and a nurse saying he only had six months to live.



» The official logo that could have been… just imagine if the game had been completed

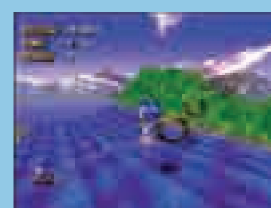
Mike Wallis in interviews has explained that Chris Coffin, programmer of the boss engine, became incredibly ill, getting pneumonia and nearly dying.

After this (possibly around August 1996 since no one has a definitive date) Wallis informed management they couldn't make it by Christmas, and the game was officially laid to rest; a shame, since Senn elaborates that under his new engine *Sonic X-Treme* could have been completed quickly, and would have been huge. "Ofer's editor was an incredible tool, and was something that allowed for what we needed too late in the game. Needless to say, it was ironic that after such a long journey we were so close to being able to actually produce the final game. So much development had been put into the editor that by the time it was ready enough, the project's fate was nearly sealed. The editor allowed one to create a Sonic world from scratch and assign properties, textures and more to any part of the world. It also allowed instant feedback so the user could work on a level and play it dynamically. If we had another six to twelve months, I'm quite sure we could have created a game that contained many elements players would enjoy. I could imagine it selling quite well if I had to hazard a guess."

JADE GULLY ACT 1

On September 10th, an anonymous individual claiming to be an ex-Sega employee came out of hiding to sell a Saturn demo of *Sonic X-Treme* (according to a Wallis interview, Coffin took several with him when leaving. However, I've had it confirmed the seller was NOT Coffin, so it does mean some are out there). As proof, the anonymous seller provided screenshots and videos of the game, plus photos of a blank Saturn CDR. LostLevels.org founder Frank Cifaldi came in as mediator for the ensuing forum auction, which started at $1000 before rising to $2500. Some people decided to band together in order to buy the disc and release it on the internet for free. Suddenly a mysterious newcomer (who will remain nameless) enters the scene, bidding $3000 and also promising to release it. He turns out to be a scammer, who lied to the entire community as revenge for, apparently, being banned from some Sonic forum previously. He continued to spin increasingly outrageous lies about the situation, upsetting several community figures. The bid defaulted back to the last person at $2500, with the entire community shaken. Of course a forum topic started, and ended up as quite the train wreck. Mr Cifaldi also vowed that future beta auctions would be private affairs, in order to stop this from happening again.

During the course of our investigation,



» Collecting rings, rushing through levels at breakneck speeds; everything was in place, but *Sonic Xtreme* still failed

"THEY SPENT TWO WEEKS CREATING SONIC X-TREME WITH THE NIGHTS ENGINE, THEN SCRAPPED THE PROJECT SINCE YUJI NAKA THREATENED TO RESIGN"



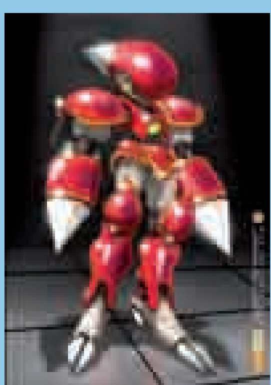
» According to Senn, this early concept image was created long before *Sonic 3D Blast* was ever developed.

SONIC X-TREME



» Just a small section of the demo that was put together on an Amiga.

"IT WAS IRONIC THAT AFTER SUCH A LONG JOURNEY – NEARLY THREE YEARS – WE WERE SO CLOSE TO BEING ABLE TO ACTUALLY PRODUCE THE FINAL GAME"
CHRIS SENN



» An image of the updated Mecha Sonic to appear in the game, provided by Chris Senn

Retro Gamer was contacted by a non-English-speaking gentleman on behalf of the real buyer, both of whom wish to remain nameless. Knowing an article was being written, they wanted to provide inside details on events. As told by the buyer's associate:

"When the Buyer first saw the auction he offered $2500, putting him above the last bid and making him the highest bidder by $500. After more than one day, when [Cifaldi] was about to close the auction, [Scammer] came in and offered $3000. Everyone within the community knows what happened next; but what is not known is that as soon as [Scammer] offered to publicly leak the demo, my friend asked if he could retract his offer. Suddenly chaos ensued. At the end, the real Buyer (who fears the Sonic community will be hunting for him if he reveals his identity) takes it for the originally offered $2500, plus $150 extra for a Sega Saturn System Disc."

A two-point-combo of an acquisition there! Those systems discs, which allow the booting of unsigned code, are highly prized commodities within the gaming underground. This inside information should also allay any concerns about the scruples of the original buyer, since upon learning that a rival bidder wished to leak the game, he wanted to back down. Our mysterious informants went on to describe this demo in-depth:

"Once the package arrived, he tried it with the system disk on a Japanese Saturn. First the logo appeared, then pleasant music. Sonic then appears on a small hill, moving slowly up and down. Indeed some ground zones move like the water, like waves, with morphing textures. (I'm then instructed to look at a variety of provided images, some photographed and some taken with the Cassini emulator). The Flicky sprites are animated; some are flying while others are just on the ground. You can also see many different kinds of bushes, also animated. Meanwhile, the clouds are sliding in the sky. Next is the river, with animated textures that morph like waves. Afterwards there are four transparent diamonds. Most online sources claim nothing can be done with them. This is not true: if you jump into the first one, you will be trapped inside and continue to spin. Then, if you jump in any direction you are shot out and invincible like in other Sonic games. You can also perform a spin dash like in previous games by charging, and then jumping or moving in a direction. How does it feel to play? Well, the Buyer tried to use the 3D *Nights* controller, but it didn't work. But it's very playable with the cross pad and would have been a really cool 3D platformer. Though certainly no *Mario 64* beater."

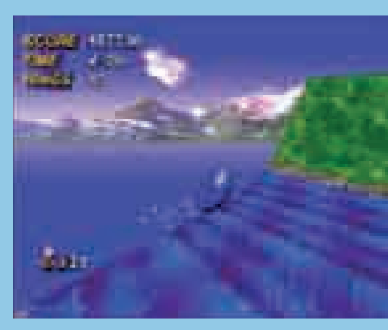
Beyond this, there is hope among the fan communities that at some point this demo will be released to the public for download via FTP clients and torrents, since the actual game file is said to be under 800kb (though Sega, like all companies, detest prototypes being leaked). There is, of course, still much to learn about the development of this one title, to which project insider Mr Senn adds, "I would encourage anyone interested to visit the www.Senntient.com forums for community discussions about *Sonic X-Treme*, its history and behind-the-scenes information. Visitors just might be pleasantly surprised at what they find there!" Retro Gamer also recommends www.sonic-cult.org and www.lostlevels.org for further reading. But make sure you have a few days spare – as there is a lot of text to read! But then, *Sonic Xtreme's* convoluted history certainly requires it…

INNOVATIVE POSSIBILITIES

Sonic X-Treme was not simply going to be Sega's mascot, shoehorned uncomfortably into an inappropriate new dimension. Hearing the lengths that the team went to in order to ensure that this new Sonic remained faithful to the 2D games, it's fair to assume that fans would have been more than satisfied. During development the entire team studied all related Sonic material, including previous games, cartoons, comics, etc. According to Chris Senn, he modelled and textured the four main characters, designed over 50 enemies, and also 60 minutes of concept music before cancellation. They also intended to re-invent Sonic for the modern era. As well as the new fisheye lens (to forever avoid camera problems) and extra characters, other innovations included the ability to throw rings at enemies, create a shield out of rings and perform spin attacks in mid-air. They also wanted to include what was cool at the time, by featuring surfing and bungee jumping. *Sonic Adventure* on Dreamcast had snowboarding, though sadly never adopted the ring throwing or bungee ideas.



» The biggest loss with *Sonic X-Treme's* cancellation was this fisheye lens camera, which according to first-hand reports may have revolutionised 3D videogames



» *Sonic the Hedgehog* grossed with *Nights* - just imagine how fantastic that could have been. What a shame it was never to be

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Jordan Grodecki (projectsonic.com) for contacting Mike Wallis and Chris Senn (www.Senntient.com), who kindly answered questions and donated images. Special thanks also to the proto buyer and associate for contacting us and sharing information.

eMag

In the chair with...

TIM SCHAFER



FROM INSULT-HURLING PIRATES TO AFTERLIFE TRAVEL AGENTS, THE CAREER OF TIM SCHAFER HAS BEEN DEFINED BY INNOVATION AND SLY HUMOUR. CHANCES ARE AT LEAST ONE OF HIS GAMES NESTLES SNUGLY IN YOUR ALL-TIME TOP TEN SO WE CAUGHT UP WITH HIM TO SEE HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

When the first game you work on turns out to be a seminal adventure by the name of *The Secret of Monkey Island*, it's fair to say that you've got something of a head start. Beginning his career at LucasArts under the tutelage of Ron Gilbert, Tim Schafer would go on to craft such beloved gaming experiences as *Full Throttle* and the justifiably adored *Grim Fandango*. His most recent project, the marvellous but sadly undervalued *Psychonauts*, finds him combining the impeccable structure and hilarious scripting of old with the platform dynamics of modern consoles. And it's all set in a summer camp, an environment which has particular resonance for Schafer, for it was while visiting one of these American institutions as a child that he first encountered the world of videogames.

"I was in an early arcade with my dad", he recalls, "And I remember him saying, 'You have to check this game out.' Way before I even got close to the cabinet I could hear it going thump, thump, thump and it was so deep and low and scary I could feel it in my chest. I was hypnotized."

The game was *Space Invaders*, and the young Tim was immediately transfixed – not only by the game, but by the possibilities it suggested.

"That was the first time I saw that games could have a visceral impact on you, and make you feel things like fear" he explains. "I'm sure *Space Invaders* doesn't seem scary to people now but it was much scarier than *Pong*, let me tell you."

While his peers shovelled their pocket money into the arcade cabinets, Tim was obsessed with finding out how they worked. With an Atari 2600 in hand, he invested in the BASIC programming cartridge and got to work. "You could write programs that were about 5 lines long", he says, "And you could move these two dots around very slowly."

In need of more processing power, Tim resorted to guerrilla tactics to expand his programming skills. "I used to go down to Radio Shack, break out of the Backgammon game they always had running on their TRS-80, and type in my own programs really quickly." Schafer's speed programming never got a chance to flourish. "I could maybe get it drawing some random rectangles before they booted me off", he laughs.

Regardless of the shortsighted Radio Shack employees evicting a nascent games genius, Tim's love for games stayed with him through adolescence and into adulthood. Fresh out of college, he landed possibly the cushiest first job in the world – working for what was then called LucasFilm Games at the Skywalker Ranch.

"The offices were cosy, wooden works of art with cobblestone fireplaces and goose down-filled couches", he remembers. "Famous people visited every week. Lunch was catered. Star Wars - which was still fun back then - was all around us. I was like, man, this industry is awesome!"

Walking straight into such a glamorous environment did little to prepare Tim for some of the less appealing realities of the games business. "I was pretty insulated up there", he smiles. "It's not all free lunch and wookies."

Tim's first task was playtesting the *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* action game, followed by the NES conversion of *Maniac Mansion*. The latter brought him into contact with Ron Gilbert, then assembling a team for his next project – a pirate adventure called *The Secret of Monkey Island*. Impressed with Tim's writing ability and sense of humour, Gilbert teamed him with fellow designer Dave Grossman. The experience had an enormous impact on Tim's creative outlook.

"The *Monkey Island* writing process was great because we would all do our little scenes, and then Ron would come by and check out our stuff", Tim reveals, "He'd play it and if he didn't laugh we'd be crushed and we'd cut that part, but if he did laugh, maybe some people would gather around to see what was so funny. You rarely get that kind of instant audience reaction in games."

Tim took away some important lessons from his time on *Monkey Island* that continue to inform his work even today. "I learned to always make sure my name gets on the box", he laughs, "Very important!"

Tim stayed on *Monkey Island* for the sequel, and the core of the *Monkey Island* team went on to develop the *Maniac Mansion* sequel, *Day of the Tentacle*, with Tim stepping for the first time into the project leader spot, sharing the duty with fellow *Monkey Island* veteran, Dave Grossman.

The game was another smash hit and Tim was ready to fly solo – and start developing his own characters and stories. The result was 1995's *Full Throttle*, a biker adventure in which you had to clear your name after being framed for murder. It was a complex project and it tested Tim's talent to the limit. "Games are so hard to make", Tim grins with hindsight. "They always turn out to be much harder to get done than you think they're going to be. If you knew at the beginning of a game how bad things were going to get, you'd probably quit right there."

Given the opportunity to send a message back to his 1995 self just before he embarked

"IT'S NOT ALL FREE LUNCH AND WOOKIES"

TIM ON WORKING AT LUCASFILM

IN THE KNOW

IN BRIEF...

After becoming entranced with *Space Invaders* at an early age, Tim Schafer soon found himself infused with a love of games and eventually landed himself a position at the prestigious LucasFilm Games. Starting off by playtesting titles such as *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, Schafer soon found himself working on the legendary *The Secret of Monkey Island*. *Full Throttle* and *Grim Fandango* quickly followed, until Schafer, disappointed with his lack of creative control left to form a brand new company, Double Fine.



» These groovy t-shirts were made to promote *Full Throttle*.



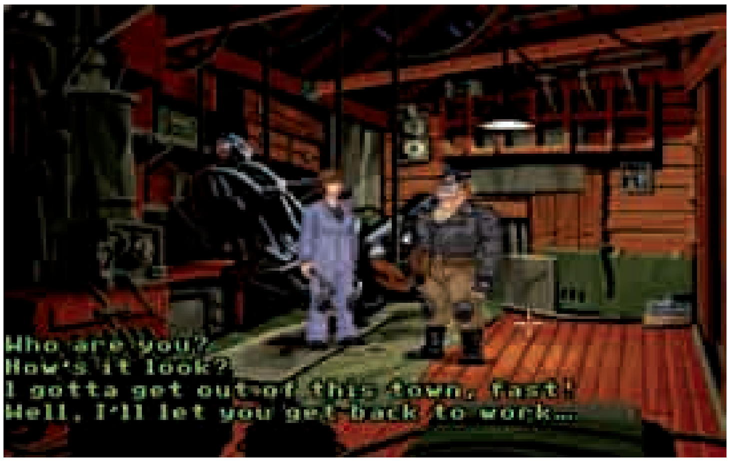
» Death takes a holiday in *Grim Fandango*

"I'M SURE SPACE INVADERS DOESN'T SEEM SCARY TO PEOPLE NOW. BUT IT WAS MUCH SCARIER THAN PONG, LET ME TELL YOU"

TIM'S FIRST GAMING EXPERIENCE



» The Nightmare Before Christmas influence is clear in *Grim Fandango's* look, but the story is pure Bogart.



» Life was so much simpler when you had all your options spelled out for you…

In the chair with...

TIM SCHAFER



» Le Chuck may have looked like a fearsome zombie on the box, but the ending of *Monkey Island 2* proved otherwise…



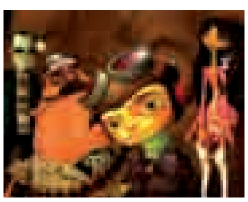
» *Monkey Island's* Guybrush Threepwood went from naïve matinee hero to broad cartoon buffoon over the course of the first two games.



» "Let me tell you about Brokeback Mountain…"

American Psycho

Tim's latest outing, the Xbox platformer *Psychonauts* may be a thoroughly modern game but it has classic gaming roots hardwired into its DNA. Quite apart from the superbly balanced find-and-fetch gameplay and the enormous feature-packed levels, the whole concept drips with the same laugh-out-loud humour familiar from Tim's previous work. The hero, Raz, is a young boy who runs away from his circus home to join a group of international, psychically-powerful secret agents known as the *Psychonauts*. Sneaking into the psychic training camp, he finds himself on a quest through the mental landscapes of the other characters as he tracks down his missing classmates. Packed with sight gags and verbal sparring, highlights include a voyage through the mind of a conspiracy nut, all Moebius strip roads and sinister suburbia, and Lungfishopolis, a city in the mind of mutated fish, in which Raz appears as a Godzilla-sized monster. Psychonauts may not be retro in vintage, but it's timeless in its feel. Check it out.



on his first solo game, Tim opts to play it cool. "Oh man, that is too dangerous a proposition" he laughs. "Where would I start? I think it's best not to beam that message back. Some things are better left unknown. But I would tell myself to buy a house with the money I made off that, instead of spending it on Twinkies."

Full Throttle was followed in 1998 by *Grim Fandango*, a lush detective yarn set in the Mexican afterlife, part Tim Burton, part Raymond Chandler. A huge critical hit – and still hailed as one of the greatest games of all time, regardless of genre – sales didn't match the acclaim, the PC games market having latched on to first-person shooters and real-time strategy with a ferocity that remains to this day.

He spent a year developing an unreleased spy game for LucasArts ("A mystery the world will never know - except for the 200 or so people who got the design document mailed to them thanks to a really bad computer virus that infected LucasArts while I was on vacation…" he quips) but it was clear the time had come to go it alone.

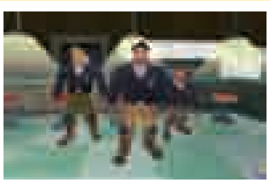
"MTV wanted to discuss making a *Full Throttle* cartoon, and I wanted to do it, but Lucas management didn't. That frustrated me", Tim reveals, "Much later, I heard about a sequel to *Full Throttle* being made, and no one had even asked me about it! I realised I'd never be able to control what happened to these characters and worlds. To create something and then have someone else control its future is creepy."

There followed a seven year gap between *Fandango* and last year's *Psychonauts*, an eternity in gaming terms. Not that Tim wasn't busy…

"Games take too long to make" he confesses. "It's really frustrating. When we announced *Psychonauts* the story in the press was 'Tim Schafer returns to games!' And I felt like John Travolta when *Pulp Fiction* came out. I was like, 'Hey! I was here the whole time, jerks!'"

Thus Double Fine was born, Tim's independent development outfit in San Francisco, and in 2000 work began on *Psychonauts*. Despite the hefty gaming legacy hanging over him, Tim insists he doesn't feel under pressure to top his previous hits. "I can only really make the

THROTTLED



In April 2003, LucasArts announced that Tim's first solo hit, *Full Throttle*, would be receiving a modern sequel designed for the PS2 and Xbox as well as the expected PC version.

Set in the same "surreal and desolate future" as the original, the story joined Ben and his gang, The Polecats, on the trail of a rival biker group, convinced they're responsible for destroying the vital transport links that connect the townships. Of course, things weren't going to be that simple, and a conspiracy plotline was planned to point the finger at an unscrupulous corporate villain.

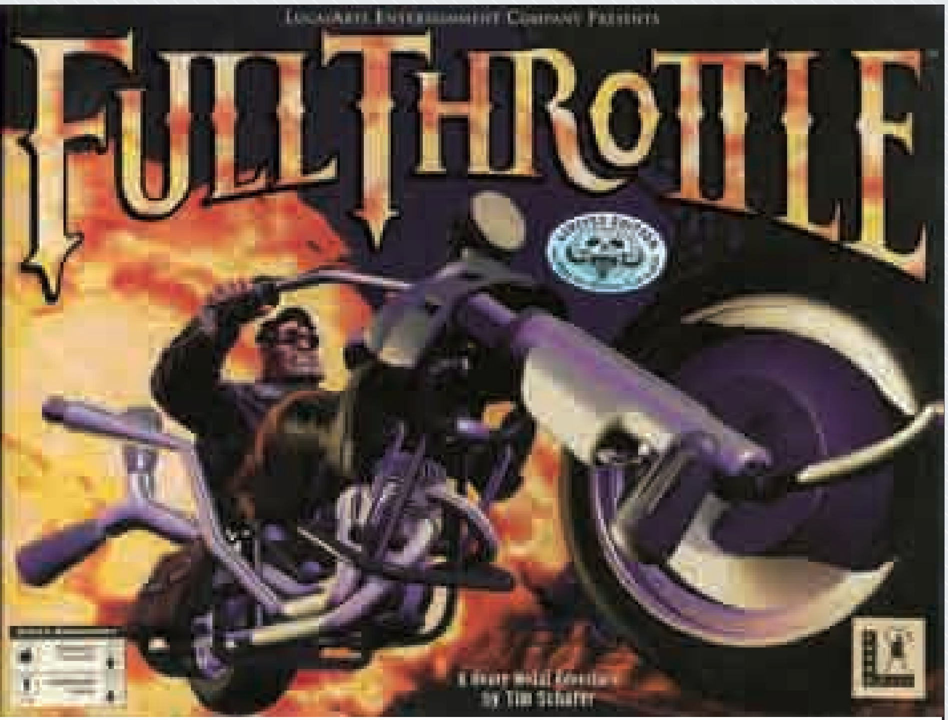
The usual fetch quest item puzzles were to be included, but the 3D environments were also to host arcade style melee combat (hey, it was for the consoles) with over 40 weapon types littering the game landscape, including pool cues, chairs and even guitars. Successful attacks filled Ben's "mojo meter", enabling more powerful moves to be unleashed.

The game was demoed to the press in May 2003, to largely favourable responses, but the axe fell by August and the game was unceremoniously cancelled.

"We do not want to disappoint the many fans of *Full Throttle*", said a terse LucasArts press release, "And hope everyone can understand how committed we are to delivering the best quality gaming experience that we possibly can."



» Wayward teens, mad scientists and more quirky humour than you can shake Douglas Adams at



» The "heavy metal adventure" boasted "humans killed" and "expletives" on the warning label.

"ART FORMS DON'T NEED YOUR CHARITY. THEY LIVE OR DIE ALL ON THEIR OWN. IT'S A NATURAL PROCESS"

TIM ON THE DEATH OF THE POINT-AND-CLICK GENRE

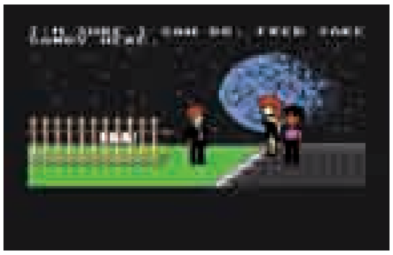
game that I'm excited about at the moment", he says, "So expectations aren't really relevant to the equation."

While some fans were dismayed to see Tim abandoning point-and-click adventures for a console platform game, he has little time for knee-jerk nostalgia.

"People shouldn't cry for any genre" he proclaims. "I think people actually show disrespect for an art form when they talk about keeping it alive. Back off with that feeding tube, buddy! Art forms don't need your charity. They live or die all on their own. Be loyal to the concept of quality and imagination, not a scheme for mouse control."

That's not to say he's down on the retro scene, but he's certainly wary of putting too much stock in the past for the wrong reasons. "There are a lot of great old games out there but I think we are swayed by our own nostalgic feelings sometimes", he muses. "We often remember games as being better than they were. The experience was the game intersected with who you were at the time, and you'll never be able to experience it the same again."

In keeping with this forward-looking philosophy, Double Fine is already working on its next project. "It's a secret", Tim chuckles, "But this time we're starting out with a whole lot more experience and brains and bathrooms that work. So you know it's going to be good."



» And so began *Maniac Mansion*, heralding a new era in adventure gaming...

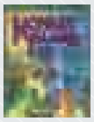


» The NES version of *Maniac Mansion*, Tim Schafer's first professional game credit – as a playtester.

FEATURED GAMES

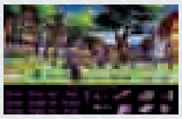


THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

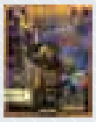


The seminal point-and-click adventure that blended fiendish puzzles with frivolous humour to stunning effect plays a lot straighter than you remember it, but Ron Gilbert was the driving force rather than Schafer's madcap modus operandi.

Tim says: "I remember that Ron came up with the idea for insult sword fighting, and I was against it at first. I thought people would feel so ripped off! But he was right, and I learned not to be so fast to reject crazy-sounding ideas. Those are often the best."

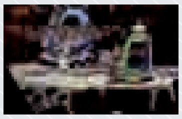


MONKEY ISLAND 2: LE CHUCK'S REVENGE



Guybrush Threepwood returns for a voodoo flavoured adventure that managed to be smarter, funnier and far weirder than the first game. And it features that infamous ending; a twist that is either a slap in the face or a touching homage to imagination. Naturally, the subsequent sequels swiftly swept it under the carpet and went back to high seas hi-jinks.

Tim says: "Only really, really smart people understood the ending. So it goes without saying that I have no idea what it meant. And even if I did I'm sure I've forgotten it all by now. That was a long time ago. How did it end? Was that the one where it turns out that Guybrush isn't really a woman after all?"

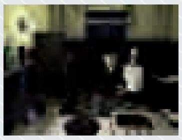


DAY OF THE TENTACLE

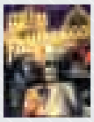


The follow-up to *Maniac Mansion* saw Tim take control of his first project and, in doing so, step into the shoes of his mentor – and Mansion creator – Ron Gilbert. The result was a pop culture riffing juggernaut, immediately more indebted to Looney Tunes and Mystery Science Theater 3000 than the Mad Magazine gags of the original.

Tim says: "Dave Grossman and I were co-project leaders on that one. We designed it together, and each wrote half the dialog. That was a really fun collaboration, plus we had Ron Gilbert and Noah Falstein around in the beginning, and for the whole project we had (artists) Peter Chan and Larry Ahern contributing a lot of ideas. Good times!"

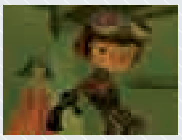


GRIM FANDANGO



Hailed by many as one of the greatest games ever made, *Grim Fandango* had the quirky flair of previous Schafer projects, but also a compellingly poignant storyline. In Manny Calavera, Schafer created an instantly iconic character who still boasts internet fansites eight years after his only outing.

Tim says: "The part of game creation that most interested me - the act of creating a believable fantasy world that feels real to the player, sucks them in, and leaves them vulnerable to endless, mischievous entertainment - could be put down as the foundation of any game. For Grim Fandango, it was the world that excited me, and the characters flowed out of that."



PSYCHONAUTS



A laugh-out-loud hilarious tale of psychics, mental baggage, paranoid milkmen, bullfighters and bacon, *Psychonauts* is the best animated movie Pixar never made genetically spliced with the most finely honed platform game environment since the heyday of Mario. Endlessly inventive and polished until it sparkles, don't be surprised if this ends up being your favourite game of 2006.

Tim says: "I'm still doing what I enjoy best. A lot of things, like the platform game mechanic, are new. But if you play *Psychonauts* and you read the bulletin boards around camp you'll see that some things are pretty much exactly like they were on *Monkey Island*."

BARBARIAN: THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR

OFF WITH HIS HEAD!



- **PUBLISHER** PALACE SOFTWARE
- **RELEASED:** 1987
- **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** COMMODORE64
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1+



HISTORY

Ok, it's time to come clean. I didn't buy *Barbarian* because it featured cool graphics, a spookily eerie soundtrack or cracking gameplay. I simply picked it up because there was a nice pair of tits on the front cover…

Maria Whittaker's dirty pillows aside, Palace Software's impressive fighter has stood the test of time rather well and even today manages to put up quite a stiff fight. Sure, its sword and sorcery shenanigans have been eclipsed by franchises such as *Soul Calibur* and *Samurai Shodown*; but back in 1987, to play *Barbarian* was to witness a revelation. *Way of the Exploding Fist* and *International Karate* (*IK+* was yet to arrive) may have come first and been just as good to play, but they could never match the sheer brutality of *Barbarian*.

Vicious head-butts quickly sent your opponent reeling, while swift sword chops caused gouts of claret to gush from their various struck body parts. You may not have had any sort of force feedback back then, but by golly you felt every last strike. The evil moves were further enhanced by some great sound effects that added an extra layer of hurt to the proceedings; particularly when you heard the frightening swish of the dreaded Web of Death…

Perhaps though, it was *Barbarian's* sheer unpredictability that allowed it to stand apart from its peers. Your barbarian's health was represented by six red spheres; and every successful blow depleted half an orb, thereby effectively allowing you to absorb 12 hits before dying. Time an overhead chop correctly though and you could take your unfortunate opponent's head clean off his shoulders. Immediately ending the match. While you raised your sword in victory an ugly goblin loped towards the fallen body, kicked the severed head off-screen and removed the headless corpse.

Constantly knowing that every move you made could potentially be your last elevated *Barbarian* above its many peers and gave it an edge that many other games since have sorely lacked.




00 00000



Year Released: 1992

Original Price: £399

Buy it now for: £148 (New) £12+ (Used)

Associated Magazines: Amiga Format, CU Amiga, Amiga Power, Amiga Action, Amiga Active, Amiga Computing, Amiga Force, Amiga Fun, Amiga Mania, The One, Total Amiga (still in print)

Why the Amiga 1200 was great… As the most powerful open-ended system, the Amiga had an army of developers who began life as bedroom programmers and risen to prominence. As such they were incredibly passionate about the Amiga community, and continued to create brilliant games long after it became apparent that the Amiga 1200 was on its last legs. Between 1994 and 2000, it felt special to be an Amiga owner because of the dedicated fans and developers who kept the dream alive.







AMIGA 1200



COMMODORE'S AMIGA 1200 WAS ORPHANED ONLY 16 MONTHS AFTER ITS INITIAL LAUNCH, YET IT WENT ON TO BECOME THE SECOND BEST-SELLING AMIGA OF ALL TIME AND FEATURED A CATALOGUE OF GREAT GAMES THAT WOULD OFTEN PUSH THE 32-BIT COMPUTER BEYOND ALL EXPECTATIONS. LOVINGLY SUPPORTED BY THE GAMES INDUSTRY, THE 1200 REALLY WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL. ASHLEY DAY SHOWCASES THE COMPUTER THAT REFUSED TO DIE.

In 1992, Commodore was an unstoppable force. Sales of the C64 were approaching 16 million units, and the Amiga 500 was everyone's 16-bit computer of choice. Technology was marching on and Commodore was about to launch their next generation Amiga. The situation was looking rosy, yet few could have predicted that the Amiga 1200 would be Commodore's last great computer.

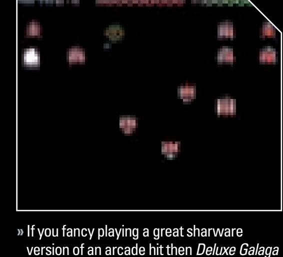
The phenomenally popular A500 had been around for five years by 1992 and, as a games machine, was starting to look a little underpowered in comparison to the newest hardware, particularly the Super Nintendo. Always eager to stay ahead of the competition, Commodore launched two new Amigas with the intention of dominating the video game and business machine markets yet again. The Amiga 4000 was designed for the high-end market, and came with a 68030 or 68040 processor running at 25MHz, 6MB of RAM and a hard disk drive. The A1200 was designed for low-end users, and was the option that most gamers went for. It included a 68020 processor at 14.32MHz, 2MB of RAM and an optional hard disk. Like the A500 before it, the 32-bit machine featured several custom chips with real names rather than arbitrary numbers: Alice and Lisa controlled the AGA display, Gayle was a combined system address decoder and IDE controller whilst Budgie took care of the memory processes. Both computers were host to the AGA (Advanced Graphics Architecture) chipset that allowed 256 colours to be displayed simultaneously, and each one was backwards compatible with the old Amiga 500 games.

Despite the impressive specs, the A1200's initial launch bundle, named Desktop Dynamite, did little to convince gamers of a significant leap in power from the A500. Though bundled software, like *Deluxe Paint 4 AGA* and *Wordworth 2.0 AGA,* showed off the excellent creative capabilities of the hardware, the bundled games were an insult. *Oscar* was a simple, bug-riddled platformer that took advantage of none of the A1200's enhancements, whilst *Dennis* was another shoddy platformer based on an even shoddier kids' movie. It did have the benefit of being AGA enhanced, but still looked incredibly poor and gave the wrong impression about the fledgling A1200.

Following the trend of the Desktop Dynamite bundle, many publishers were reluctant to develop AGA exclusive titles, as it would limit the sales to just those users with new machines. So for a couple

The Shareware Scene

The Amiga was a great machine for shareware fans. Its open-ended system and large user base ensured that it had a healthy home-brew community that stayed faithful right to the end and beyond. There were loads of shareware distributors who sold games for £1 per disk, whilst magazine cover disks and, later, the Internet were a good way to find shareware cheaply.
Of all the excellent A1200 shareware games, that far outclassed many commercial titles, *Deluxe Galaga* is perhaps the most fondly remembered. The update of the Namco arcade game was actually much better than the original. This was largely due to the range of power-ups, including a *Darius*-like catch ability that acquired enemy ships as allies, that added variety to the shooter and made it a lot more fun to play. Go to www.aminet.net to download *Deluxe Galaga* and thousands of other brilliant games.



» If you fancy playing a great sharware version of an arcade hit then *Deluxe Galaga* is the perfect one to cut your teeth on

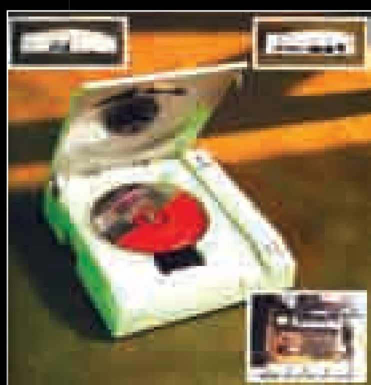
AMIGA 1200





» **Left:** Commodore never really marketed the A1200 as a games machine, despite its obvious benefits. **Right:** Escom advertised the A1200 as a cheap computer, but the price was the same as three years previously





» **Left:** Amiga Format were enamoured with the new Amigas, and would be for the next eight years. **Above:** A prototype of the CD1200: a CD-ROM attachment that Commodore planned for the A1200



» *OnEscapee*: a beautiful, *Flashback*-style game from 1997

of years most games were designed to work on the original Amigas, and only look slightly better on the AGAs. This soon began to change as more A500 owners upgraded to the A1200, and in November 1993 the first real AGA only game was released. *Overkill* was a *Defender* clone, with graphics that owed much to the Amiga's skilled demo scene: each level featured several layers of smooth parallax scrolling, and used the A1200's palette of 16.8 million colours to create backgrounds awash with trippy effects. Though its gameplay was nothing new and the sprites were a little lacking, *Overkill* showed that the new Amigas had definite promise and would soon go on to host some truly great games.

Later that year, everyone's favourite Amiga developer, Team 17, unleashed the first AGA killer app. *Alien Breed II* was available for both Original Chipset (OCS) machines and AGA machines, but the AGA version was released first and featured several enhancements over its OCS counterpart. Each level used the A1200's wide range of colours to draw subtlety different scenery, whilst the improved sprite handling capabilities allowed Team 17 to display several more aliens on screen at once. Although this made it the more difficult of the two versions, it did make for a much more intense experience.

Following *Alien Breed II*, the A1200 exclusive titles began to appear more frequently but it wasn't enough to inspire impressive hardware sales. As a serious business machine, the Amiga 1200 was much more expensive than the 386 and 486 PCs, and as a games machine it lacked the wide variety of AAA titles that the Japanese consoles featured. Though the machine had some success in the animation industry (the Amiga was used to create the CGI in the first episode of *Babylon 5*, for example) and was popular with the hardcore fans, it didn't stand head and shoulders above the competition as the A500 had. Though the A1200 was the second best-selling Amiga of all time, it still trailed far behind its predecessor.

By 1994, Commodore was struggling to stay afloat. Having invested profits in several innovative yet ultimately doomed projects, it had lost millions of pounds and was unable to pay off many of its creditors. Rumour has it that Commodore's money problems were so bad that the American government dramatically blocked sales of the CD32 in the States, because Commodore had failed to pay damages owed from a lawsuit. Meanwhile, the Philippines government actually seized hundreds of hardware units because of money owed to a manufacturing plant. On April 29th 1994, Commodore filed for liquidation and eventually ceased all operations. Escom, a German PC manufacturer, bought up Commodore's rights in 1995 and continued to sell A1200s, but at £399, it was far too expensive to compete with the emerging PlayStation and Saturn. Escom didn't take the platform seriously, and most now consider it to be a dead machine.



» *Alien Breed 3D* was one of the better games to be exclusive to the A1200

Remarkably enough, the fall of Commodore did nothing to deter the production of new games, and the Amiga went on to become one of the few machines to enjoy a long period of releases long after production of the hardware had ceased. The Amiga still had an enormously active userbase, and there was plenty of money to be made from new titles: it could even be argued that the Amiga's best games only appeared after Commodore died (*Worms* wasn't released until 1995, for example).

Seeing that the Amiga needed a shot in the arm if it was to compete in the modern computing field, several third-party manufacturers created upgrades for the A1200 that would increase its power and usability. External CD-ROM drives were released (Commodore had actually planned one of these during the making of the CD32), and several different expansions were made available that would upgrade the processor to 68030, 040 and 060 varieties. For those gamers who had stuck with the A1200, these upgrades were essential as they allowed the Amiga to play games that had been unimaginable in 1992. *Alien Breed 3D* had kick-started a trend for *Doom* clones on the Amiga, and the expansion cards (which also featured extra RAM) greatly improved the performance of many of the Amiga's FPS games. *Alien Breed 3D II*, *Genetic Species* and *Breathless* all looked great when using the extra hardware, which was so powerful that a perfect conversion of *Quake* was eventually released on the computer. The CD-ROM drive allowed the A1200 to play the entire range of CD32 titles (which were being sold off very cheaply by then), and opened the door to bigger games with full speech and FMV cut scenes. Many publishers, like Vulcan Software, announced that they would be exclusively moving over to CD only games. Meanwhile, Amiga Format and CU Amiga began to carry cover CDs that quickly became an invaluable way for Amiga owners to acquire vast quantities of excellent demos and shareware without access to the internet.



» *Quake* running on an expanded A1200 yesterday. Looks good, doesn't it?

With the expanded hardware open to new possibilities and high street retailers continuing to stock Amiga games until around 1998, there were some excellent Amiga 1200 games released despite Commodore's demise. Team 17 pushed unexpanded Amigas to their limits with the *Alien Breed 3D* games, and delivered an Amiga exclusive *Worms* title in the shape of *Worms: Director's Cut*. The Bitmap Brothers released an AGA version of *The Chaos Engine 2* in 1996, the same year that the SNK-inspired *Fightin' Spirit* arrived on Amiga CD-ROM. Psygnosis released the little known *All New World of Lemmings*. PC point-n-click game *Big Red Adventure* was ported to Amiga CD and, of course, the Amiga's highly productive shareware community created hundreds of great AGA games and demos. There were loads of quality games released for the Amiga in its final years but by then the PlayStation and Nintendo 64 dominated the games market, and most of the interesting Amiga games went unnoticed by all but the most attentive fans.

Although brand new Amiga 1200s can still be bought (try www.stellardreams.co.uk) and new games are produced occasionally, the A1200's time has well and truly passed. Yet it had a decent following for a machine that was cut down so soon after its launch. The last issue of CU Amiga was published in August 1998, whilst Amiga Format unbelievably continued until May 2000: a staggering six years after the fall of Commodore. Their prolonged lifespan was testament to the dedication of the Amiga fans and developers who both believed that, when Commodore died, the A1200 had not realised its full potential and could achieve greater things. Their continued support made the Amiga 1200 a computer with a wealth of unknown gems, and for retro gamers it is now as much a voyage of discovery as a welcome nostalgia trip.



After the 1200

The A1200 was the last popular Amiga computer, but it certainly wasn't the last model of Amiga hardware. Escom released the A4000T in 1996; this was an expanded Amiga 4000 in a tower casing instead of a desktop one, and was actually designed by Commodore shortly before their demise. Though the A4000T proved popular with developers and journalists, it was never marketed and is rumoured to have only sold around 2000 units.

Several attempts were made to create a new Amiga line of hardware in the late Nineties, but the plans always seemed to fall through. As such the next Amiga would not appear until 2002 when Eyetech produced the AmigaOne, a PPC-based Amiga that was officially sanctioned by Amiga Inc, and intended to run the new Amiga OS4. Sadly, at the time of writing, the AmigaOne is temporarily unavailable, and Amiga OS4 is still awaiting a commercial release.



» Escom's A4000T was released in 1996 and was essentially an expanded Amiga 4000 with a tower casing

PERFECT TEN GAMES

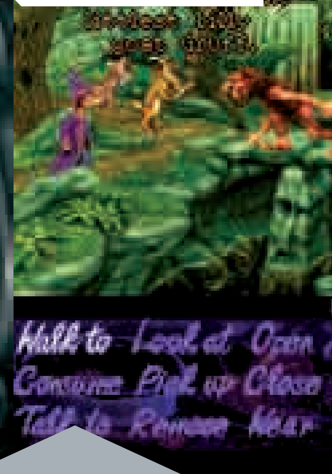




WORMS: DIRECTOR'S CUT



ALIEN BREED



SIMON THE SORCERER

WORMS: DIRECTOR'S CUT

» **RELEASED:** 1997
» **PUBLISHED BY:** TEAM 17
» **CREATED BY:** TEAM 17
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** WORMS

It would be criminal to have an Amiga top ten and not mention at least one *Worms* game. This exclusive Amiga title was the perfect farewell from Team 17 for the machine that had served it so well over the years, so it's unsurprising that many fans consider it to be the best game from the franchise.

Glorious 2D visuals, well-designed maps and some truly outrageous weapons – no one will forget the first time they used an old woman or a baseball bat on a hapless opponent – all combined to create what was easily the pinnacle of the series. Here's hoping that Team 17's *Worms* update for the PSP and DS are just as good.

FIGHTIN' SPIRIT

» **RELEASED:** 1996
» **PUBLISHED BY:** NEO SOFTWARE PRODUCTIONS
» **CREATED BY:** LIGHT SHOCK SOFTWARE
» **BY THE SAMEDEVELOPER:** BLACK VIPER

Although several versions of *Street Fighter II* appeared on Commodore's machine, the Commodore's inability to perfectly emulate the arcade's control system meant that plenty of other brawlers received greater recognition.

One such fighter is Light Shock Software's *Fightin' Spirit*, a nifty little scrapper that has a decent range of opponents, a laughably cheesy plot and some solid special moves. Many of the characters are able to morph into vicious animals, which adds greatly to the comedic elements that run throughout the game. While *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* looked a lot nicer, simpler controls made *Fightin' Spirit* the better game; at least on the 1200…

ALIEN BREED

» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **PUBLISHED BY:** OCEAN
» **CREATED BY:** TEAM 17
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SUPER FROG

No doubt wanting to cash-in on the popularity of *Doom* on the PC, Team 17 decided to create its own First-Person shooter for the 1200. The result, *Alien Breed 3D*, may not have been without its problems, but remains arguably the greatest FPS on the machine. While the small playing window was dreadfully annoying – although many argued that it added atmosphere to the game – the finely structured level design, stunning visuals and gruesome deaths delivered a *Doom*-like experience that many felt the Amiga could never achieve. You needed an Amiga with a fair amount of grunt to get it working, but on a decent system, *Alien Breed 3D* was untouchable.

T-ZERO

» **RELEASED:** 1999
» **PUBLISHED BY:** PXL COMPUTERS
» **CREATED BY:** CLICKBOOM
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** NAPALM

***T-Zer0* is generally regarded as the reason to upgrade the Amiga 1200.** By adding a CD-ROM drive and extra RAM, the humble A1200 was able to run the most beautiful horizontal shooter there has ever been on a Commodore computer. Put simply, *T-Zer0* looked stunning; with its biomechanical levels, screens packed with bullets and animated backgrounds, it was technically and artistically brilliant. Unusually, for a late Amiga game, the excellent graphics were matched by the great gameplay. Essentially an *R-Type* clone, *T-Zer0* stood out because of the power-downs – items that were the opposite of power-ups, and best avoided if you wanted to do well.

SIMON THE SORCERER

» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **PUBLISHED BY:** ADVENTURE SOFT
» **CREATED BY:** SIMON WOODROFFE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** WAXWORKS

Whilst many excellent point and click adventures are available on the Amiga, few were actually converted to AGAs.

Luckily, Adventure Soft's *Simon the Sorcerer* did receive a graphical overhaul, and the end result is a glorious looking title that's choc-a-block with gorgeous visuals, fantastic voice acting and some wonderfully designed puzzles that will have you scratching a trench into your head. Don't be fooled by its humble roots and the lack of a LucasArts logo – this is point and click adventuring at its very best.



FIGHTIN' SPIRIT



T-ZERO

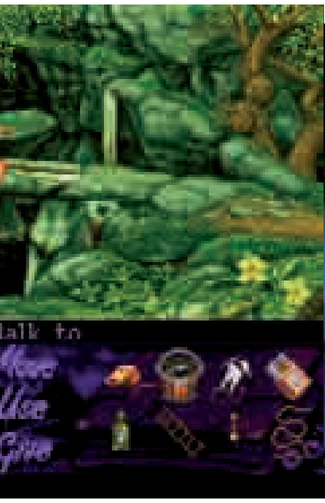


DELUXE GALAGA



AMIGA 1200

Despite a somewhat ropey start, Amiga's 1200 soon started delivering a string of quality titles that simply weren't possible on inferior machines. Before you write in though, any top ten is going to be entirely subjective and of course open to violent debate, and that's what Retro Gamer is all about. Like-minded gamers, indulging in sheer nostalgia. Bring it on.





OnESCAPEE



STAR TREK: 25TH ANNIVERSARY

DELUXE GALAGA

- » **RELEASED:** 1995
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** NA
- » **CREATED BY:** EDGAR M. VIGDAL
- » **BY THE SAME AUTHOR:** DELUXE PAC-MAN

Bedroom coder Edgar M. Vigdal had a reputation for porting popular arcade games to the Amiga, then adding loads of great extra features without removing any of the original charm. The most fondly remembered of his games is *Deluxe Galaga*, a remake of Namco's classic 1981 coin-op. As well as remaining faithful to the *Galaga* gameplay, Vigdal's version added collectible money that could be used to buy unique weapons between rounds, and bonus levels that took the form of mini-games within the confines of *Galaga's* basic structure. *Deluxe Galaga* was an Amiga phenomenon back in '95, and is still an essential shooter today.

OnESCAPEE

- » **RELEASED:** 1997
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** SADNESS SOFTWARE
- » **CREATED BY:** INVICTUS TEAM
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** 1NSANE

Fans of *Flashback* would be well-advised to check out Invictus Team's superb *OnEscapee*, as it shares many elements with Delphine's classic. From its atmospheric opening sequence to its stunningly drawn locations, *OnEscapee* manages to impress on practically every level.

If there's one complaint we'd make about *OnEscapee*, it's that the game's difficulty spikes rather abruptly upon reaching the third stage. Puzzles are a lot trickier to work out, and death can often come quickly and without warning. Still, the attention to detail, outstanding looking visuals and masterful use of sound instantly draws you in and soon makes you forget *OnEscapee's* minor niggles.

XP8

- » **RELEASED:** 1996
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** EFFIGY SOFTWARE
- » **CREATED BY:** WEATHERMINE SOFTWARE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BUBBLE GUN

During the A1200's twilight years, most of the big name developers had moved onto pastures new and it was left to the smaller software houses to keep the games coming. Due to their limited budget, most opted to produce simple yet highly playable arcade games, like Weathermine's *XP8*. This vertical scrolling shooter seems underwhelming at first, but once you get past the lacklustre opening level the game reveals itself to be pretty good fun. The formula was hardly revolutionary, but *XP8* delivered solid blasting action that looked superb thanks to the rendered graphics and silky smooth animation. Superb.

STAR TREK: 25TH ANNIVERSARY

- » **RELEASED:** 1994
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** INTERPLAY
- » **CREATED BY:** METADIGM
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** NA

Whether you love or loathe *Star Trek*, there's no denying that this excellent icon- driven graphic adventure is a fantastic use of the licence. The seven available missions are structured like a typical episode from the series, and are frightfully authentic. The theme tune and credits are there; Captain Kirk dictates his captain's log, and each character behaves perfectly. While the puzzles aren't quite as complex as some of LucasArts' games, it still takes a fair amount of time to complete and will certainly tax those gamers not familiar with the genre. Don't be put off by the attached licence, as this is a wonderful title and an essential addition to your collection, even if you're not a fan of Captain T. Kirk.

PAYBACK

- » **RELEASED:** 2001
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** APEX DESIGNS
- » **CREATED BY:** APEX DESIGNS
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** FRONTAL ASSAULT

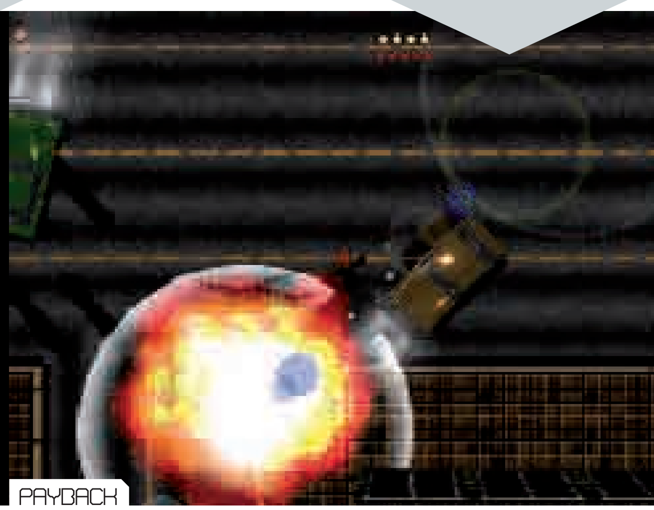
For those who have played it, Apex Designs' *Payback* is much more than just a simple clone of *Grand Theft Auto*. Hell, many of them swear that it's actually miles better.

It's certainly an impressive achievement on the 1200, thanks to it having a proper 3D perspective, superb attention to detail and extremely satisfying gameplay. Speaking of gameplay, it's near identical to that of GTA's, and sees the player activating missions by accessing an available telephone kiosk. Said missions involve anything from stealing cars to simply killing someone, yet there's enough variety in them to ensure that objectives don't become too repetitive. A sterling effort, that's recently become available on the Game Boy Advance.



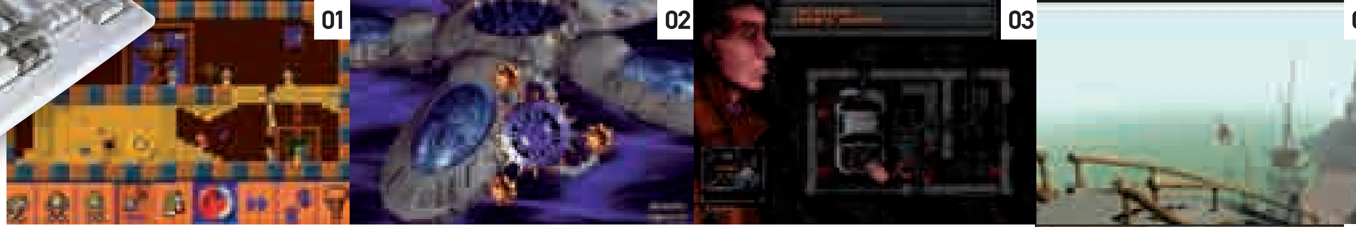


XP8



PAYBACK





AMIGA 1200
and the rest...

Considering that Amiga's 1200 was cut so short, it still supported a varied range of games and certainly gave those pesky consoles a damn good run for their money



01 ALL NEW WORLD OF LEMMINGS
02 SUPER STARDUST
03 DREAMWEB
04 MYST
05 COLONIZATION
06 JAMES POND 3: OPERATION STARFISH
07 ROADKILL
08 PINBALL MANIA
09 SIMON THE SORCERER
10 1869
11 ALFRED CHICKEN
12 CHAOS ENGINE
13 JUNGLE STRIKE
14 GLOOM
15 DENNIS
16 QUASAR WARS
17 ACTION CAT
18 PRIMAL RAGE
19 RALLY CHAMPIONSHIPS
20 SLAMTILT
21 WHIZZ
22 BLOODFEST
23 FLYIN' HIGH
24 COALA
25 OSCAR
26 GUARDIAN
27 OVERKILL
28 WASTED DREAMS
29 AIR BUCKS V1.2
30 DEATH MASK
31 BUBBLE HEROES
32 NAPALM
33 T-ZERO
34 PINBALL ILLUSIONS
35 GENETIC SPECIES
36 RISE OF THE ROBOTS
37 FIGHTIN' SPIRIT
38 CAPITAL PUNISHMENT
39 KANG FU
40 THE LION KING
41 BURNOUT
42 HUMANS III: EVOLUTION LOST IN TIME...
43 STRANGERS
44 GLOOM 3: ZOMBIE EDITION
45 THE SPERIS LEGACY
46 ALADDIN
47 BLITZ BOMBERS
48 DETROIT
49 SIMLIFE
50 LORDS OF THE REALM
51 SUBWAR 2050
52 EXILE
53 MARVIN'S MARVELOUS ADVENTURE
54 SUPER STREET FIGHTER II TURBO
55 PINBALL BRAIN DAMAGE
56 CIVILISATION
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84 ISHAR: LEGEND OF THE FORTRESS
85 XP8
86 BIG RED ADVENTURE
87 ALIEN BREED 3D 2: THE KILLING GROUNDS





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KILL ZONE
GOAL!



8-Bit-'em-ups

"All difficult things have their origin in that which is easy, and great things in that which is small." LAO TZU

THE BEAT-'EM-UP GENRE WAS, IT SEEMS, A LITTLE TOO BURLY FOR THE LIGHT WEIGHT MACHINES WHO FACED IT IN THE HOME COMPUTING RING, BUT AS THE LITTLE DRAGON SAID: "OBEY THE PRINCIPLE WITHOUT BEING BOUND BY IT." OVER THE YEARS, MORE THAN A FEW SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS HAVE FOLLOWED THIS DOCTRINE AND PROVEN THAT, DESPITE THEIR SIZE, 8-BIT HOME COMPUTERS WERE MORE THAN A MATCH FOR THE FIGHTING GAME; IT WAS SIMPLY A MATTER OF STYLE...

Beat-'em-ups are unique among computer and video games in that they developed quite organically from several sources all at once, rather than one seminal title. Whatever the actual reason, 1984 was the year which saw the reinvention of button pounding delight.

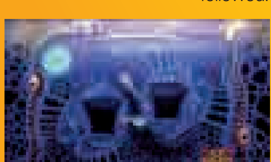
If we extrapolate the development times required to produce new software, it's apparent that none of the three fighting games from 1984 had any knowledge of each other's existence. While *Kung-Fu Master* and *Karate Champ* made use of dedicated arcade hardware, Bug Byte's *Kung Fu* required nothing more than a 48K Spectrum to redefine the way we thought about computer game violence. Croatian programmers Dusko 'Duke' Dimitrijevic and Damir Muraja told us how they came up with their revolutionary notion. "I hadn't seen any other martial arts games at the time," begins Dimitrijevic. "I just thought it would be a fun thing to do. I really liked Bruce Lee movies at the time and it just seemed like fun to beat up opponents in a computer game - martial arts style." Muraja shared Dimitrijevic's vision, although he was unaware of Dimitrijevic's interest in martial arts at the time. "I got involved in the project after the whole concept stage of the game was already finished," he explains.

Kung Fu was remarkable for a lot of reasons, other than its strange new method of gameplay. The large, well-animated graphics initially appeared to be vector drawn, while the terrific backdrop gave a level of depth and colour the Spectrum had rarely seen, although as Dimitrijevic explains, all was not as it seemed... "It just appears to be vectors, but it was actually 'normal' bitmapped graphics so it could look much better without losing any speed or memory. We were still learning. Our real difficulties were with equipment - all we had was two Spectrums, without even microdrives!"

"Actually, that was our greatest challenge, continues Muraja. "We wanted to make large characters because that had never been seen on ZX Spectrum before. While doing it we

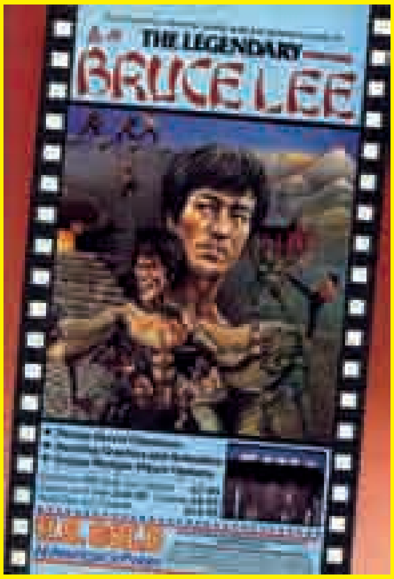
WAY OF THE WARRIOR

In 1979, Cinematronics (of *Dragon's Lair* fame) released the arcade game, *Warrior*, which made use of their highly unstable 'Vectorbeam' circuitry to draw a bird's eye view of two knights battling with swords. Due to the unreliability of the Vectorbeam technology, and the fact that the game had to have two players, *Warrior* never saw much attention, despite being the first game to attempt the one-on-one fighting scenario. For the next five years, the idea laid dormant, suggesting that *Warrior* didn't provide much, if any, inspiration for the games that followed.





» CRL's *Ninja Hamster* from 1987 was one of the more surreal one-on-one fighters that attempted to refresh the genre. It didn't really work, though.



» A decent game starring the man who inspired all the early games. Shame it wasn't an actual beat-'em-up!

had to learn about program synchronization with screen refresh. We were very excited when we eventually accomplished smooth movement of the characters."

Following closely on the heels of the trail blazing Yugoslavian code warriors was a game that would mark a seminal moment in 8-bit computing. Melbourne House's 1985 '*Way of the Exploding Fist*' was designed and built by Australian programmer Gregg Barnett, and although *Fist* also began life as an independent vision, Barnett admits that once work had begun and he saw *Karate Champ* in the arcades, he was profoundly inspired by the slick gameplay and reinvented some of the ideas he'd seen.

Even so, when playing *Fist* there isn't any immediate sense of it being a *Karate Champ* clone. Barnett's unique designs permeate the gameplay and fighting style enough for *Fist* to stand with its head held high in the beat-'em-up annals. Just like *Kung Fu*, the initial concept of *Fist* was born from a love of eastern films. Barnett knew he had a hit five minutes after he first set the game off compiling while he went to make a coffee. When he returned to his desk, his co-workers were queuing out of his office door trying to sample those incredible Exploding Fists.

By 1985, developers had decided that beat-'em-ups were not just a passing fad, and set about turning their code into kung fu. Dogged by initial development difficulties, veteran programming guru Archer MacLean was brought in to help System 3 join the fray.

"Around August '85 I started working on a whole new karate game structure, and adapted it into my proven *Dropzone* game shell. I set about drawing and re-drawing various backdrops and animations, and wrote various simple tools to allow me to animate frames together and time various sound effects to trigger at exactly the right frame time. I also remember watching loads of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan films. I had lived in Hong Kong in the '70s and even saw a Bruce Lee film being made once, so I had an interest in the genre from very early on."

International Karate was a huge success (especially on the C64, although the Spectrum version was a bit of a lame weasel) despite much of its thunder being stolen by arriving second on the shelves to *Exploding Fist*.

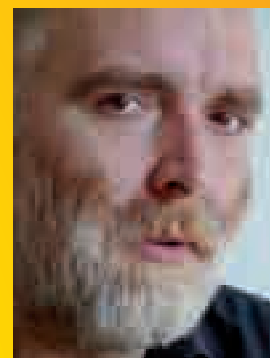
"I remember fondly playing *Fist* over and over, with various friends from university," continues Maclean without as hint of remorse. " On more than one occasion we played right through till the sun came up next day. It was seriously addictive, and I take my hat of to Greg Barnett for making it such a huge fun game."

Not wanting to miss the boat, Imagine (newly acquired by Ocean) quickly licensed Konami's surreal, but popular, *Yie Ar Kung Fu* arcade title – the first license of its kind. This was also the first game to pit the player against a large cast of different characters, each using individual techniques. Its cartoony sprites and energetic action proved arcade fighting games could be translated faithfully to home machines.

A year later and every last original idea was being squeezed from the genre, though it appears they were still building from the original template. 1986 was also the year for sequels, as *Fist 2: The Legend Continues* was released and *Yie Ar Kung Fu 2* was hurriedly turned out. This was part of a package of licenses Imagine had bought from Konami, and was actually a conversion of an MSX game rather than an arcade title. Regardless of its origins, the potentially great franchise stopped dead when the sequel failed to impress.

Clearly inspired on a foundation level by *Exploding Fist*, Gremlin Graphics' *Way of the Tiger* could easily be considered a superior continuation to Melbourne House's premier title than its own sequel proved to be. The large, well-animated characters, three level scrolling and introduction of weapons fighting forged a yardstick that no other beat-'em-up of the year could easily measure up to. The home market may have stagnated for a few months, but it was all happening in the arcades, and that coin-op investment was ready to pay off in the home market.

Variations on the same theme trickled out, serving only to water down the already limited appeal of the one-on-one, but patient fans were rewarded in 1987 by two - quite literally - ground breaking games. Ocean's head of development Gary Bracey and veteran



» Damir Muraja – one of the founding fathers of the beat-'em-up industry



» "The music in *Kung Fu* was random. It used pentatonic scale and oriental sounding rhythm, but the notes are random. Damir coded that." Dusko 'Duke' Dimitrijevic



» *Renegade 3* seriously took the whistle with its Captain Caveman look-alikes, and the series suffered an undignified death in 1989.

"I HAD LIVED IN HONG KONG IN THE '70S AND EVEN SAW A BRUCE LEE FILM BEING MADE ONCE, SO I HAD AN INTEREST IN THE GENRE FROM VERY EARLY ON " ARCHER MACLEAN ON INTERNATIONAL KARATE'S ORIGINS

8-Bit-'em-ups



» *Yie Ar Kung Fu* proved extremely popular on the 8-bit systems, with skilled players being able to repeatedly clock it

programmer and designer Mike Lamb told us about their chart topping, street fighting, ball-crunching, skull-splitting coin-op conversion of *Renegade*.

"We sourced the licenses ourselves due to the strong relationships we enjoyed with the major coin-op companies," explains Bracey. "However, *Renegade* was a bit of an exception as the coin-op itself was comparatively unknown, and Ocean made a great job of the conversion, to such an extent that it was an enormous success." With the licence snapped up Lamb soon found himself working on the new project. "I just finished work on *Arkanoid* and *Renegade* just happened to be the next thing in the pipeline," says Lamb. "Ocean got the arcade game and it was very popular with all the programmers and artists. In fact, it was so popular the management had to put a lock on it to stop people skiving off work to play it!"

Though it managed to slip under the radar for most arcade goers, once the conversion hit the shelves, *Renegade* became an overnight success. With its limited playing field and smaller sprites, conversions onto the 8-bit machines were extremely faithful and a new age in beat-'em-ups began. The slick programming and clean graphics ensured that *Renegade* played beautifully while retaining 100% of the arcade's dynamic gameplay. It didn't go unnoticed by Bracey…

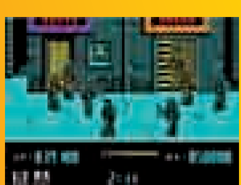
"Playing *Renegade* we quickly realised that we had something special; knowing it would be a hit," he continues. "All the developers involved on *Renegade*, on all formats, put a lot of heart into it... and it shows. They were all very talented people." It's a view that's shared by Lamb. "The home computers weren't particularly powerful and I think *Renegade* played to the strengths of the Spectrum and Amstrad in particular," continues Lamb. "A lot of arcade conversions ran very slowly on home computers. However, *Renegade* had relatively few sprites and scrolling backgrounds weren't essential to the gameplay, so the frame-rate was never a problem. The main issue was trying to squeeze all the animations into memory. There were a number of tricks I used. We split the body into head, torso and legs. I think everybody got the same legs. It worked pretty well, except the hookers looked much better in fishnets!"

Which brings us nicely back to Archer MacLean (we're talking about additional characters, not the fishnets, of course), whose earlier work designing *International Karate* put him in good stead to add one final, significant twist to the one-on-one karate simulator; a third, computer controlled opponent, who shunted *IK's* sequel to immediate success.

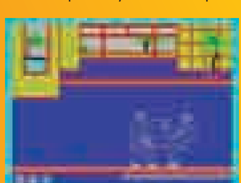
"*IK+* was a flash of inspiration whilst trying to solve the problem of a game design where opponents would be seated around the dojo," explains Maclean. "I wanted the next player to get up and walk into the fight as the other went and sat down, or got carried off in pieces! Then I just decided to make it a three-player simultaneous game, instead of one on one as with *International Karate*. As soon as I had this idea I knew it was a good one, and couldn't work fast enough to make it happen, yet at the same time trying desperately to not tell anyone because it just seemed so simple to do!"

Beat-'em-ups had become part of the industry's bread and butter gaming, though it was getting harder and harder for developers to capture the interest of the genre's fans. This also meant that whenever genuine imagination was infused into a beat-'em-up, the players devoured it. In 1988, just before the unequivocal failure of the home versions of *Double Dragon*, Mike Lamb stepped back into the scrimmage with an '8-bit only' sequel to *Renegade*.

"People always want something new or better with video games. Unless beat-'em-ups were going to continually improve it was inevitable that they would die out," continues Lamb. "Looking back, I can't think



» *Renegade* was a defining moments for arcade fighters and proved they could be ported by skilled developers



» *Kung Fu* defined the fighting genre on the 8-bit systems

GAMES REVIEWS



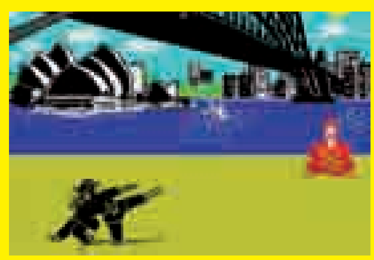
KUNG FU

The original still holds its own against the greats that followed, which adds to its achievements when you consider they had no basis to actually work from.
Standing in the colourful and clearly drawn dojo, the two large combatants are armed with a small selection of standard karate techniques, including chops, high kicks and sweeps.
What's of particular note is the necessary use of defence and retreat. Although blocking was a common feature, a mastery of these aspects has rarely been required in even the most renowned beat-'em-ups. Don't be fooled by its looks, *Kung Fu* is well worth a play.
72%



WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

The yardstick by which all other 8-bit beat-'em-ups (and beyond) was measured. This game still plays terrifically today, with its large characters and easily adopted gameplay. Plenty of moves with varying difficulty of application (except, perhaps, for the dreaded shin kick which never fails) meant that unlike today's beat 'em ups, button mashers always fell foul of the well trained.
With the skull splitting, gut busting sound effects, you can't help but kiai to yourself every time a difficult move lands. Forget *Karate Champ* and play *Fist*, instead.
88%



INTERNATIONAL KARATE

IK had a difficult childhood. Developments fell apart, new designers had to start from scratch and there was hot litigation flying around the place like roundhouses and reverse punches. The end result was System 3's excellent one-on-one fighter lost in a photo finish with *Fist*, and has lived in its shadow ever since.
With its thunder gone, *IK's* list of improvements (like sampled speech, bonus rounds, extra moves and wicked music) couldn't quite persuade punters to buy another one-on-one. I recommend trying them anew and re-evaluating your opinions – you may be surprised.
86%



» In Japan, *Kung Fu Master* was called *Spartan X*, capitalising on the 1984 Jackie Chan film of the same name.



» The one-on-one beat'-em-up has come a long way indeed from its humble beginnings…

of anything we could have done to get more out of the Spectrum than *Target Renegade*. It may sound a little conceited, but I think with *Renegade* and *Target Renegade* we did the best for the Spectrum. Those games were very successful for Ocean. I don't think anything that came out afterwards outdid us technically and nobody came up with any gameplay innovations either."

Target Renegade, with its rough urban inflection and vigorous two-player co-operative gameplay, marked the zenith of 8-bit beat-'em-ups. Better yet, it had everything the highly anticipated home versions of *Double Dragon* failed to deliver a few months later. Although several other games floated on by, including impressive conversions of *Street Fighter* and *Final Fight*, the 16-bit machines were rapidly establishing themselves, and the first genre to be usurped by consoles - who could boast more than one fire button - was the beat-'em-up.

Although the 8-bit home computers will never be immediately remembered for their fighting games, a few choice titles pushed the boundaries of their machines further than any other type of game must be acknowledged for establishing that most underrated and enjoyable form of computer generated violence.

"LOOKING BACK, I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING WE COULD HAVE DONE TO GET MORE OUT OF THE SPECTRUM THAN TARGET RENEGADE." MIKE LAMB

THE STYLE OF NO STYLE

When Epyx licensed *International Karate* and released it as *World Karate Championship* in America, Data East proclaimed it infringed on their copyright of *Karate Champ*, and sued. The district court forbade Epyx from selling further copies of *World Karate Championship* and also ordered the company to issue a recall. Epyx took the fight to the Ninth Circuit court, which reversed the decision of the district court, stating that 'karate is not susceptible of a wholly fanciful presentation' and that 'a 17.5 year old boy would not regard the works as substantially similar'. The case has had long reaching repercussions as it set the legal precedent for creating martial arts based games. In 1994, the tables were turned when Capcom sued Data East for the similarities between *Street Fighter II* and *Fighter's History*. Due to the case Data East had brought against Epyx, the court was forced to rule in their favour.



YI EAR KUNG FU

I was never a big fan of the arcade machine, but playing *Yie Ar* alongside all the other 8-bit-'em-ups revealed it to be something of an unsung hero. It made me realise that 99% of early beat-'em-ups were based on Japanese systems, while this little delight really captured the essence of the cheesy Chinese B-movie. The strange kung fu styles, wildly different characters (ranging from flying fat men to fan dancing femmes fatale) and fast paced, tongue-in-cheek continuous gameplay has helped this title age better than any other of the time. The comical 'whoosh' noises that accompany your jumps just add to the charm. Essential.

91%



WAY OF THE TIGER

As part of a tie in with the 'choose your own adventure' books of the same name, Gremlin took the newly established standards for the fighting game and reproduced them as well as anybody else had done previously (if, perhaps, a little slow due to the detailed animation). What stands out is the way in which they applied that basic gameplay.

With its dynamic playing field shifting from scrolling action, through a multi-enemy, single screen arena to 'end of level boss' scenario, this was essentially three games cleverly woven into one. Great value for money, and triple the longevity.

75%



RENEGADE

Having since played both arcade versions (Eastern and Western), I must say that I prefer *Renegade's* scenario to *Kunio's*. The seediness and permeating malice of gangland street brawling gives the game a more tempered edge than *Kunio's* playground skirmishes.

Ocean's conversion is probably better remembered than the original coin-op, and for good reason. *Renegade* achieved that most prestigious goal of finally bringing the arcade into our homes, regardless of which format you owned. The Speccy version was best, though, which seems only fitting, as Clive's baby was a bit of a rebel itself.

90%

YOUR KUNG FU IS GOOD

Special thanks go to the following for their help with this article (lest they kick my head in with their 8-bit kung fu):

Gary Bracey
Dusko Dimitrijevic
Bill Harbison
Mike Lamb
Archer MacLean
Damir Muraja
Lao Tzu

DIET GO GO

FIGHT THAT FLAB



- **PUBLISHER** DATA EAST
- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £70+ FOR AN ORIGINAL PCB



HISTORY

Think of a cross between *Bubble Bobble*, *Snow Bros* and *Rod-Land* and you might, just might get an insight into the sheer lunacy that was Data East's *Diet Go Go*.

Like many other single screen platformers of the time, the aim of the game was relatively simple: clear all the enemies from each stage and pick up any goodies that they left behind. Unlike its peers though, *Diet Go Go* placed you in the lycra-cladded bodysuits of two Japanese teenagers who were desperately trying to avoid putting on weight.

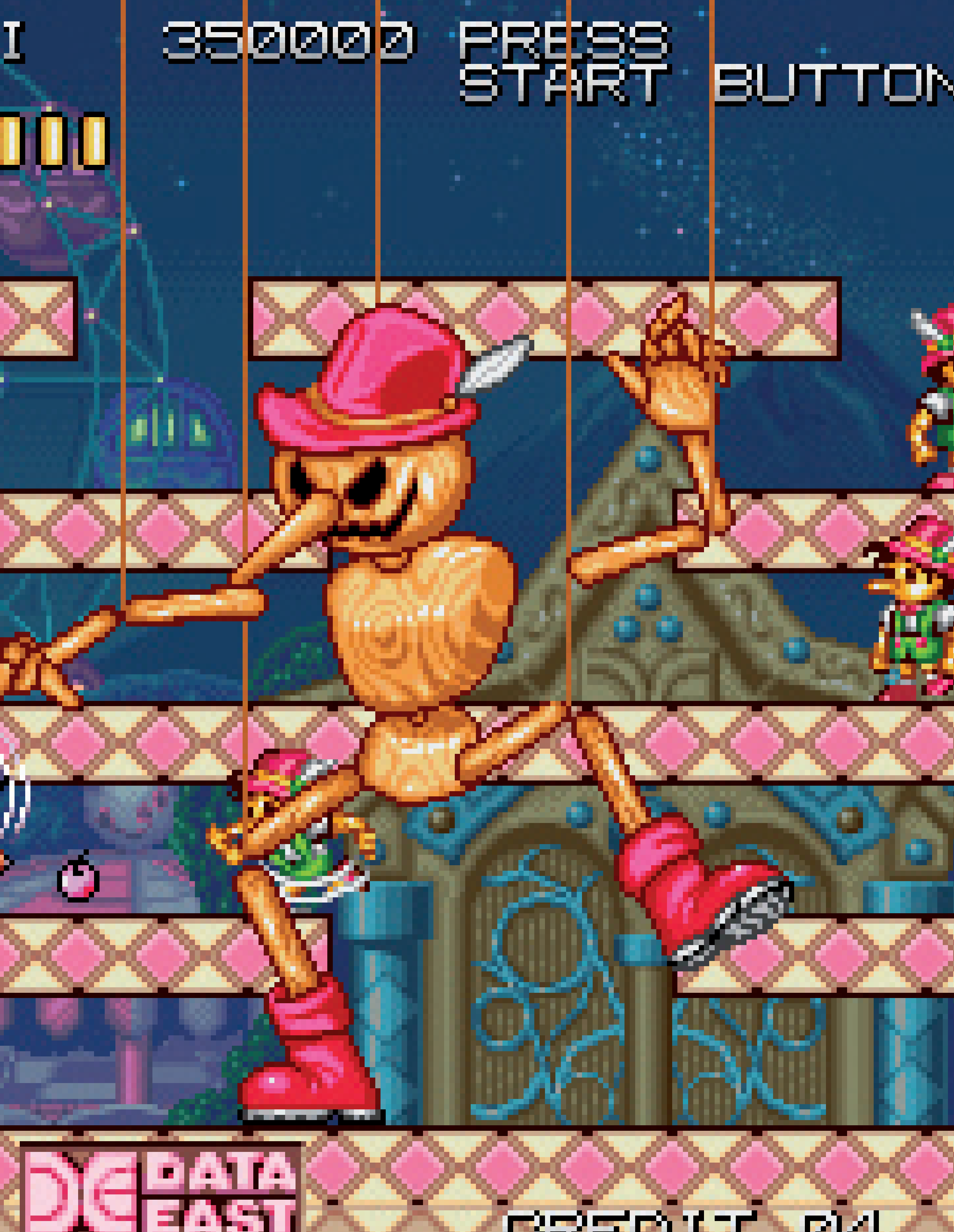
The outrageously cute duo would jump around the screen and bombard their foes with what looked like small pink apples. When an enemy was hit, it would immediately start expanding in size and would slowly begin to rise to the top of the screen. Jump into it and the deflated foe would zoom around the level taking out any monsters that were foolish enough to get in its way.

Of course, your numerous foes - many of which were nauseatingly cute - were far from defenceless and would bombard you with a variety of food. Should any of it hit you, your cute teen would immediately gain weight and lose a considerable amount of speed; getting hit again would cause you to lose one of your three lives. Enemies could still kill you with a single touch though, so it was always best to avoid them all together - although this in itself was far from easy due to the sheer number of them on-screen.

Eventually you'd reach an extremely memorable boss that often came equipped with a variety of interesting attacks. An oversized crab, cute vampire and a giant wooden marionette were just a few of the highlights, but many more wackier foes lay in wait, providing of course that you were skilled enough to reach them.

Diet Go Go may not have been a well-known arcade game and we've never seen a home conversion of it, but that's just made the experience of playing it all the more sweeter for us.

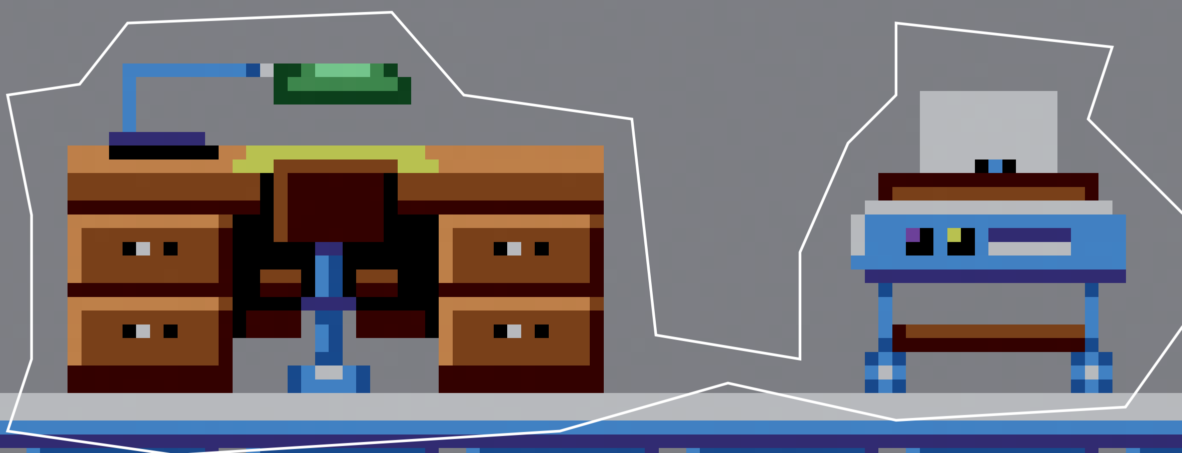


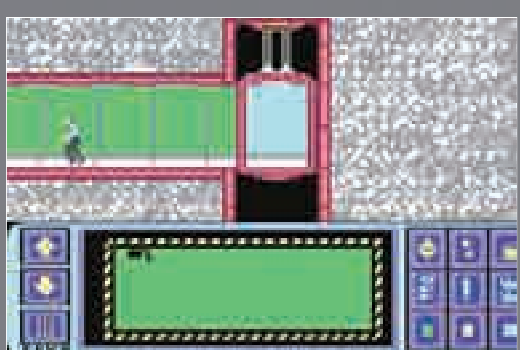

350000
PRESS
START BUTTON
DATA
EAST

THE MAKING OF...

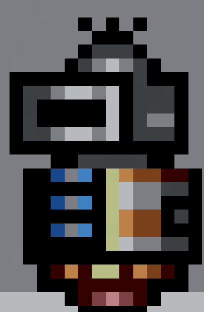
IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

"Another visitor. Stay a while… staaaaay forever!" The haunting tones of Elvin Atombender billow from the speakers at the start of the game, creating the perfect atmosphere for what follows; a program of such perfection and magnitude, it is still talked about, played and defeating gamers more than twenty years after it was released.

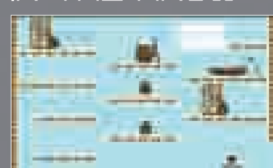




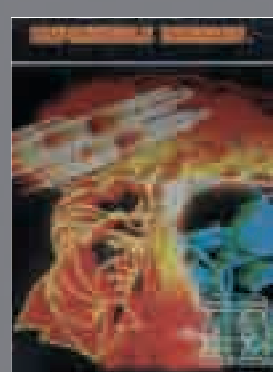
» This lair will self-destruct in six hours



IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** CBS (US), US GOLD (UK)
- » **DEVELOPER:** DENNIS CASWELL
- » **RELEASED:** 1984
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5-10

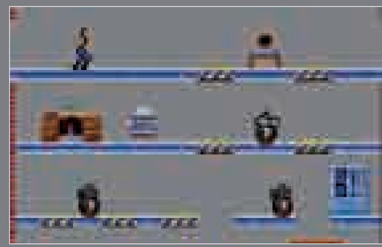


For such an epic game, it may not be surprising to learn that the programmer responsible, Dennis Caswell, is a very unassuming person. After receiving a Master's degree in computer science from UCLA in 1981, an old roommate informed Caswell that his brother was starting his own games company. This company was Arcadia (later Starpath), responsible for the Supercharger hardware for the Atari 2600. After the video games crash, Epyx bought Starpath, and most of the staff moved over with it.

Impossible Mission was Caswell's first (and only) project for Epyx after the acquisition but work had already begun before that happened. "I do recall that I started working on the running man before the merger with Epyx had been finalized. I distinctly remember my elation at trading in my 2600 for a Commodore 64. When I was given permission to start a C64 project, I unplugged my 2600 and threw it out of my office and into the hall," laughs Caswell.

"The game took about ten months to complete, though other people remember it taking less time than that. It was definitely not designed in detail before I started to code. The first thing I came up with was the



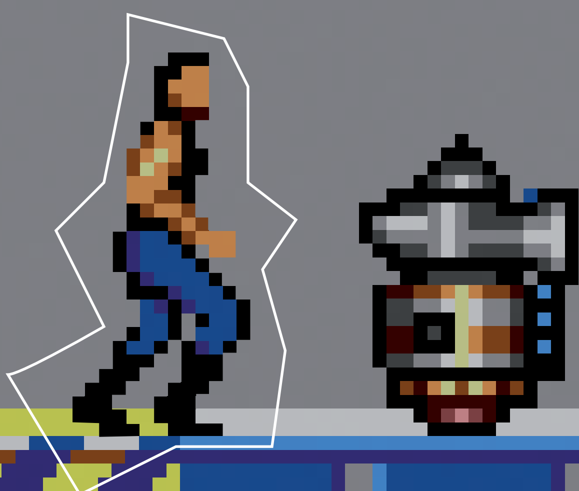


» Master System version, very colourful and pretty, pity it doesn't play as good as it looks



» Atari 7800 version of the game, possible or not?

"WHEN I WAS GIVEN PERMISSION TO START A C64 PROJECT, I UNPLUGGED MY 2600 AND THREW IT OUT OF MY OFFICE AND INTO THE HALL." DENNIS CASWELL



animation of the running man, and part of what sold the game to the Epyx brass was the idea that the main character would be larger, more realistic, and with more elaborate animation than was typically seen in platform games at that time. After that, I more or less made it up as I went along."

With permission granted, work finally began. "I got the idea for the game from watching the movie War Games, though they may not seem very closely related. Somehow, the HAL-like computer in War Games led to the idea of a platform game in which the player was required to infiltrate a computer-controlled complex." Whilst the game was inspired from a recent film, the name was based on something a lot more obvious. "During most of its development, I don't recall that *Impossible Mission* had a title. Eventually, it became time to prepare to market the thing, so we had to start calling it something. Somebody noticed the similarity to the TV show and suggested that Mission: Impossible would be appropriate but, of course, we couldn't actually use that, so we cheated and gave it a title that was legal while still creating the desired association. A bit embarrassing, I suppose, but most people seem to have forgiven us."

Caswell continues, "Apart from the speech, the game was conceived, designed, and executed entirely by me. I had no artist or sound guy or whatever. That's why there's no credits screen. The title screen says all there is to say. There were no graphics or sound design tools, either. The graphics, for example, were drawn on graph paper and converted into hex strings that were hand-typed into the code. I had to because I had no choice. We had no graphic design tools or aids of any kind, and given the coarse resolutions in which we worked in those days, I found it easier to design things directly on graph paper, rather than drawing conventionally and trying to somehow digitize everything afterwards."

Impossible Mission sees the battle between Agent 4125 and his attempts to stop Elvin Atombender, a brilliant scientist gone mad, from launching a nuclear strike against the world. A game is also quite often fondly remembered for its protagonists, and *Impossible Mission* is no exception. The Agent himself, whilst only appearing again in the 1988 sequel, lived on in sprite form; Epyx later used the same animation in some of the Games series, and unofficially appeared in other programs such as Kane by Mastertronic. The design of Atombender was a little closer to home, with his love of technology and loathing of humans. "I chose programming [as a career] because I found it easy and amusing, and because I had received assurances that one could make a living at it. I'm also rather maladjusted socially and often prefer the society of machines to that of people." Caswell admits.

The running man design also caused a few problems. "There was a problem getting the game to fit into the available memory. The running man has lots of frames of animation (and I if recall takes three sprites), and he has to run in both directions. I ended up just storing the frames in one direction and letting the game flip them back and forth as needed. The game probably spends more time doing that than anything else. Reversing the running man's sprites did take a great deal of the processor's time. Fortunately, *Impossible Mission* was not otherwise computationally intensive, so there was enough time to spare."

Upon starting the game, the first thing

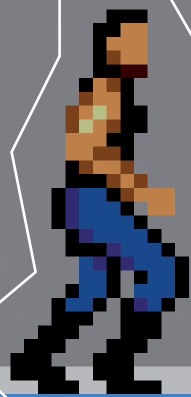


THEY SAID:

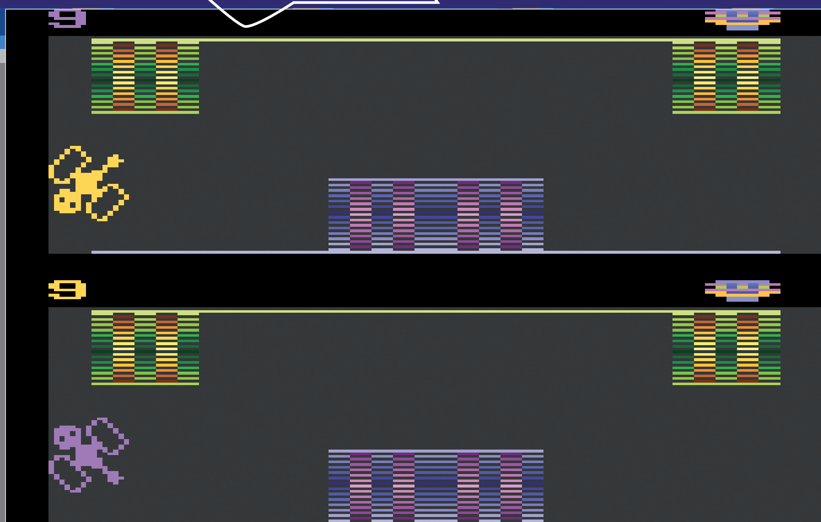
"IMPOSSIBLE MISSION IS A CLASSIC COMMODORE GAME BECAUSE OF ITS ACE GRAPHICS, SOUND, BRILLIANT GAME CONTENT AND SPEECH"

CRASH

THE MAKING OF… IMPOSSIBLE MISSION



"I GOT THE IDEA FOR THE GAME FROM WATCHING THE MOVIE WAR GAMES, THOUGH IT MAY NOT SEEM THAT THEY'RE VERY CLOSELY RELATED."



» Last game released for the Supercharger, an early multiplayer party type program

PAL VS NTSC

Although US Gold did eventually release the game in the UK, the original CBS version from the US was available to buy if you could find it. This came with a sting in its tail; in the form of an unforeseen glitch resulting from the positioning code for the electricity bolts being handled slightly differently on a PAL C64 compared to an NTSC C64. If a robot's firing pattern calls for it to shoot on the far left of the screen, the poor agent would be fried no matter where in the room he was. US Gold got around this by patching the game to prevent the robots firing in this situation; the cracking group Remember actually fixed the glitch properly in their 1997 release of the game.



noticeable is that this is no ordinary hideout. Rooms run off many lift shafts throughout the construction, platforms seemingly hang in mid-air, with large gaps waiting to catch unwary people. Occasionally there may be large sentry balls (in true Prisoner fashion) that track your every move, and then there are the human seeking robots. Nasty things those, they have a tendency to do the unexpected, and you can never really tell what sort of programming each one has until you are potentially within shooting range! Fortunately Agent 4125 is pretty agile, with a decent running speed and a quality somersault to hopefully get you out of any immediate danger. All this still doesn't make the task of reaching the pieces of furniture in each room any easier.

Ah yes, the furniture. Elvin may be a genius, but he is also very absent-minded. Access to his control room, the target of your insurgence, consists of a nine-letter password. Each letter is in the form of an old-fashioned punch card, and each card has been broken into four pieces. These pieces have been scattered about in the chairs, tables, vending machines, toilets and other appliances in the hideout. Why furniture? Caswell explains "I imagined the underground complex as being not only Elvin's workplace, but also his residence, so the standard residential accoutrements seemed appropriate. If there sometimes seems to be an implausible profusion of bathrooms, bookcases, or what-have-you, we'll just have to chalk that up to his reclusive eccentricity."

It was one thing getting all the password pieces; it was another putting them together. It was a genius concept, one that hasn't been reused since, but Caswell plays down its idea "You're very kind, but it's really just a jigsaw puzzle. It does seem likely that I made the puzzle pieces resemble punch cards for sentimental reasons. I haven't heard specific feedback about the puzzle pieces, but I have observed first-hand that the mental skills required to assemble the puzzles (you have to be able to reflect and superimpose images in your head) seem entirely distinct from those required to defeat the robots and the Rover ball. People who can handle the joystick twitching fairly easily have been known to struggle with the puzzle pieces."

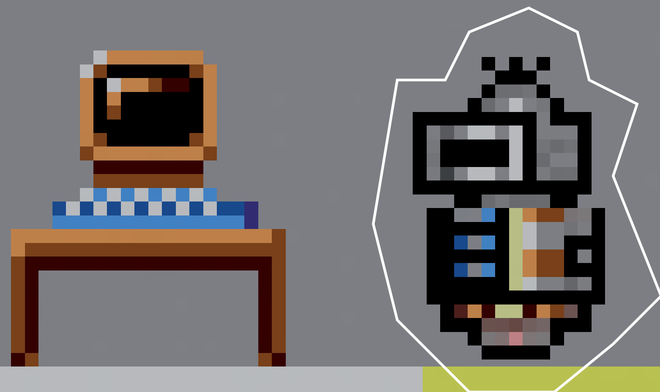
As for the passwords themselves, Caswell muses, "I probably just used the first eight nine-letter words I thought of. Recently I have found a source listing of Impossible Mission tucked away in a drawer, and I



» No, no, no… there's no limits, I mean missiles going off now



» Sinclair Spectrum version, in lovely monotones



looked them up. They are swordfish, asparagus, artichoke, crocodile, alligator, albatross, butterfly, and cormorant."

So complete the puzzle, access the control room and beat the game. Sounds easy doesn't it? To this day, it still taunts people, even though in reality it isn't actually that hard. Completing the game results in a great ending picture and more of that fabulous speech. Caswell recalls the process of adding it, "The speech in the game was real, digitized speech. Electronic Speech Systems, who also provided the software for reproducing the speech on the Commodore 64, provided the performances. I told them what I wanted the game to say, and when they asked me what kind of voice I had in mind, I said I was imagining a fiftyish English guy, like a James Bond villain. I was told that they happened to have such a person on their staff, so, instead of hiring an actor, they let him take a whack at it, and I thought he was just fine. I never met the guy who provided the voice, but, to my knowledge, the recordings were not altered or processed, apart from being digitized. It is certainly possible, though, that ESS could have tweaked them without my knowledge. There are no other digitized sounds in the game. As I recall, the digitized speech wasn't planned from the start; we grafted it on later as it was relatively easy to do."

Upon release, the game was heralded with critical acclaim, and eventually won the British Microcomputing Award for best game of 1985 with good reason. You just feel the need to have another go, and then another, and then sometime later look up and find six hours have gone by with you trying to defeat the damn program regardless of how many times of success. It's a pure case of gameplay winning over looks, except here the graphics and sound are superb as well. There is absolutely nothing to fault the game on whatsoever.

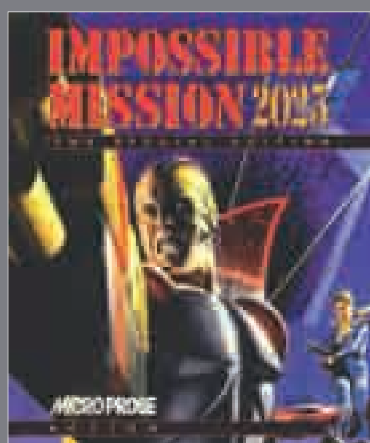
After completing the game and subsequently helping complete Pitstop II, Caswell had a falling out with the Epyx management and left the company. After producing a couple of educational titles, Caswell almost found himself back at Epyx programming for the Lynx "…but they discovered that they couldn't afford to hire anybody." He also had no involvement with the C64 sequel in 1988 that was programmed by Novotrade in Hungary.

From that, Caswell wrote *Ultimate Air Combat* for the NES, and lastly *Battle Bugs* for Sierra, though ironically he ended up back at Epyx on hire to program it. But that was to be Caswell's last game. "Until *Battle Bugs*, every game I had ever worked on was eventually completed and marketed. After *Battle Bugs*, my luck changed entirely. Nothing I worked on at Sega or 3DO ever saw the light of day, and I eventually decided that I no longer belonged in the game business and put myself out to pasture, where I have remained since."

Today, Caswell is currently married with two kids, and lives just outside Seattle working in the aviation industry. As is fit, last word remains with him. "I'd just like to say thanks for the opportunity to recall my gaming years. I'm just truly amazed that anyone still remembers this stuff."



» US Gold's packaging of the game



OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES:
Impossible Mission 2 (1988),
Impossible Mission 2025 (1993-4)

"PEOPLE WHO CAN HANDLE THE JOYSTICK TWITCHING FAIRLY EASILY HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO STRUGGLE WITH THE PUZZLE PIECES."

OTHER SYSTEMS

As is inevitable, the success of the game meant it was ported to many other systems over time, though sadly none of them quite managed to capture the same feel and passion. The Master System version actually has better graphics but the controls feel a little off, and of the rest, the BBC version probably plays the best. Spare a thought for poor Atari 7800 owners in the US though; whilst the PAL version was fine, the NTSC version has a bug which allowed puzzle pieces to be hidden under the terminals, effectively making them impossible to get and hence actually fulfilling the meaning of the game's title. Fortunately an enterprising programmer was able to solve the issue a couple of years ago and produce a working ROM.

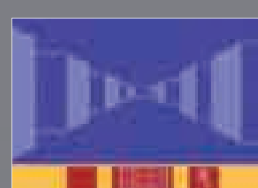


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

PHASER PATROL
SYSTEMS: ATARI 2600
YEAR: 1982

ESCAPE FROM THE MINDMASTER
SYSTEMS: ATARI 2600
YEAR: 1982

ULTIMATE AIR COMBAT
SYSTEMS: NES
YEAR: 1992



遠くの稀で、エキゾチックなゲームを愛する人々のため

FULL OF EASTERN

ANOTHER EASTERN MEGA DRIVE SMASH THAT SHOCKINGLY NEVER MADE IT TO THE UK...

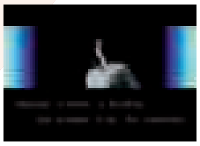
SPLATTERHOUSE PART 3

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** NAMCOT
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN HOUSE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SEGA MEGA DRIVE
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE FOR:** N/A
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £40 +
- » **CAN'T IMPORT? THEN WHY NOT TRY:** SPLATTERHOUSE 2

The first incarnation to introduce Mega Drive fans to Namcot's vile franchise, *Splatterhouse 2* was a much more linear and simple affair than its successor. The gore remained intact, with exploding eyeballs and oozing bile as much a part of the attraction as the name suggests, although the Satanic flavours drawn up during the first chapter were oddly absent. An underlying sense of humour – witness Rick's urinating stance – and SEGA had a game that would never appear on the SNES. Kudos.



Interesting fact
Japanese codeshops often use English as their primary language. Splatterhouse 3 is one example and, as such, is littered with errors both grammatical and stylistic. One early example that always sticks is 'Jennifer cowers in hiding and escapes from the monsters'. Essential stuff.

While it was possible to buy 8-bit consoles such as the PC Engine and Famicom (providing you knew where to look), it wasn't until the introduction of the 16-bit machines that import gaming truly took off in the UK. Each month, Retro Gamer will take a look at classic Japanese games that criminally never made it to UK shores. This month it's the Mega Drive's gory scrolling beat-'em-up, *Splatterhouse 3*

メガ駆動機構

With the advancing popularity of the SNES, one of the advantages SEGA still held over Nintendo was its willingness to play the controversy card. Famous for its 'family' stance – something many claimed to be a pathological desire to sanitise – Nintendo would never grant Namcot (Namco's then-home conversion department) a license to develop *Splatterhouse* for the SNES in unedited form. The *Mortal Kombat* debacle showed this only too well and, indeed, SEGA actively built on the disparity through its advertising: 'SEGA does what Nintendon't'.

Splatterhouse 2 was then a perfect coup, and when the time came for a sequel, Namcot pulled out all the stops for the third instalment. But, despite an American port, it would never appear on British shelves. One possible factor was comparatively modest sales of *Splatterhouse 2*, but it was more likely due to the threat of competition, as during the Mega Drive's autumn years, some of the most advanced software came about: Konami's *Probotector*, Treasure's *Dynamite Headdy*, AM2's titanic *Virtua Racing*, not-to-mention a raft of big-name EA licenses. Perhaps it was decided that Namcot's relatively-obscure series no longer had a place amongst the more refined titles that were emerging. That being the case, it was surely a regrettable decision, as *Splatterhouse 3* remains a thoroughly unique and deserving game that many PAL gamers will have duly missed.



» These tooth-laden gastropods will claim half your life in a single bite. Watch out for their rush attack

FROM POYCHI ROBO

GAMES FROM THE EAST WHICH NEVER MADE IT TO UK SOIL

N PROMISE



» The player often finds himself surrounded, survival counting on 'enemy management' rather than relentless button-bashing



» Once Level X is reached, the mask duly turns on Rick, battling him for evil supremacy

For those who chose to import, it was business as usual for the 'hero', Rick, a thinly-veiled homage to Friday the 13th's Jason Vorhees. Replete with hockey mask and boiler suit, the protagonist found himself at the doors of an old mansion, his wife and child somewhere within. Namcot had clearly decided to revamp the previous mechanic (PC Engine and Mega Drive) with several improvements. The first of these was the inclusion of a narrative that appeared as digitised story cards throughout the game. With a timer counting down to zero, the plot would divide depending on whether the player completed the level inside the time limit. The first task alone involved the rescue of Rick's wife, Jennifer. Failure to do so scratched her from the story and the game's ending. As progress was made, several twists emerged, most notably the son, David and his part in a ritual to free an ancient evil, as well as the ultimate level that saw the mask turn on Rick in an attempt to usurp said evil. Hackneyed, maybe, but delightfully dark for unrated, consequence-free gaming.

The second adjustment was the introduction of a 2.5D playfield, where a certain amount of vertical motion was available. Like titles such as *Streets of Rage 2*, the game took on a deeper, more convincing feel, augmented further by an open-plan progression path. Once a room was cleared, pressing 'Start' revealed a map, a giant red 'X' indicating the location of the level guardian. The path there was a matter of choice, a more direct route beating the timer but leaving certain, profit-yielding rooms undiscovered. Either way, it was a welcome variation on an ordinarily linear approach.

Visually, Namcot's artists attained a new, more sickening level of repulsion, from character design to combat animation. Creatures ranged from headless, half-rotted corpses, pulsating, legless maws and vile, semi-foetal, bird-like creatures. Bosses, however, were the most hideous; level three's standout mayor, an evil spirit that possesses David's oversized teddy bear, before bursting from the head to reveal a giant, tooth-filled jaw and skin-stripped arms. As if to acknowledge its own horrifying demeanour, it beckons the player with a single claw, whilst simultaneously emitting a piercing howl. Elsewhere, the player could expect to encounter exploding, maggot-infested giant worms or thuggish mutants, minus everything from the jaw up – tongue excluded.

Combating such monstrosities was made temporarily easier by the inclusion of a power-up feature. Collected orbs could be unleashed as a sort of 'warp spasm', swelling Rick's stature and physical power to almost-invincible levels – at least until the orb bar depleted. Different moves presented themselves, the 'french loaf' attack particularly memorable, spikes of flesh jolting from Rick's torso to smite those around him.

In keeping with the pastiche outlook, the game's music continued the theme of its predecessor, strains of 'stalk 'n' slash' pictures from the eighties surfacing, specifically John Carpenter's eponymous Hallowe'en score. Harpsichords, pipe organs and high-register strings all made a clichéd contribution, sinister arpeggios and semi-atonal clashes ramming the horror element home. Without it, the game would have suffered immeasurably.

But for all the accoutrements, the basic ingredient was still 'hack 'n' slash', a simple yet effective premise. Hammering at the enemy was all the more satisfactory given the slow change from blood-red to bile-green as the player reigned blows down. Better yet was the use of melee weapons, either large breeze blocks or meat cleavers and baseball bats. The former could be employed as projectile weapons, but would be claimed by floating spirits if dropped. The latter made short work of even the most stubborn foe. Best of all, though, was the revolting explosion of flesh come the creature's demise – truly an inspired touch. Lord knows what a 3D modern equivalent would be like.



» Land enough blows on this seemingly-harmless teddy and the true occupant will show its ugly face

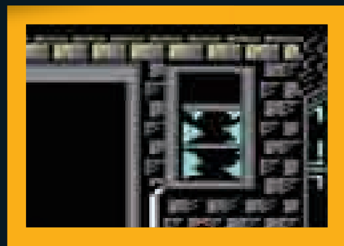
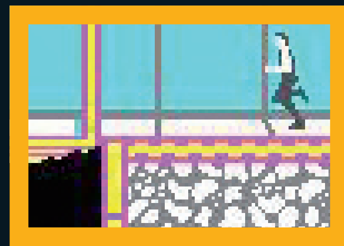
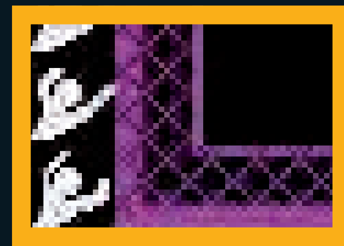


» Power up and you'll be able to flex your muscles properly, as illustrated by this suplex-style slam

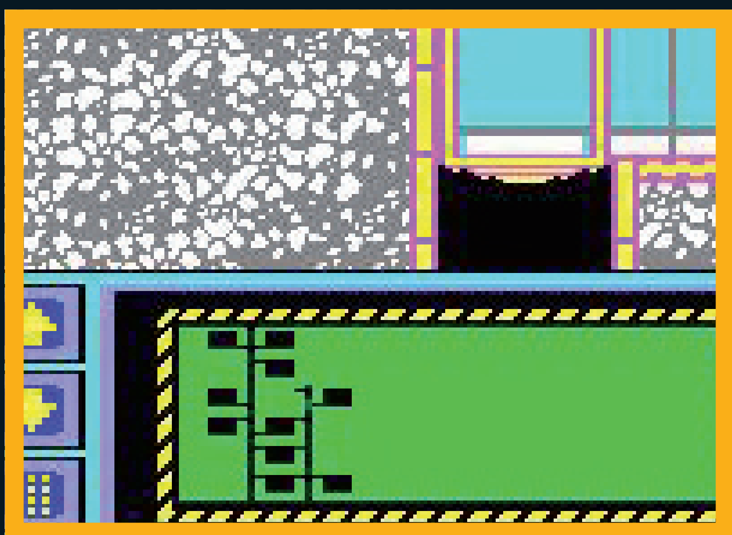
私を読み、私に書くことができ、私に知らせれば好みのゲームはある

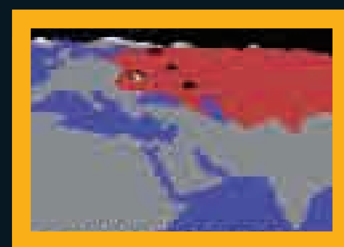
COMPANY PROFILE

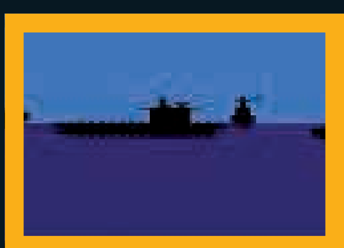
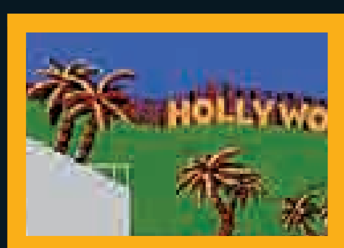
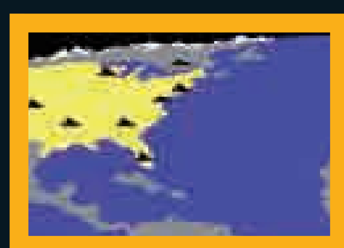
US GOLD

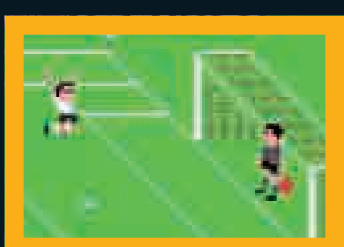
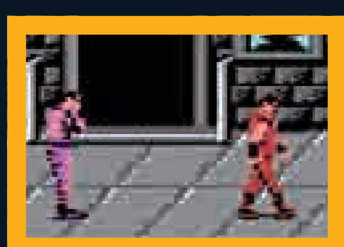
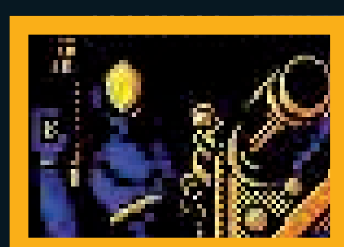
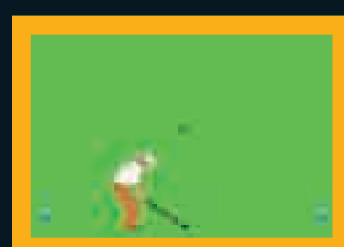





GEOFF BROWN, THE FOUNDER OF US GOLD REVEALS ITS ORIGINS IN A BRAND NEW INTERVIEW

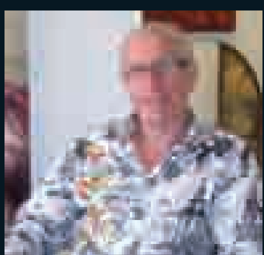




Geoff Brown shows that telling lies can actually lead to success after buying some games from America and persuading Curry's that he was the official importer of the said titles. After setting up distribution company CentreSoft, Geoff developed US Gold - a company which brought countless classic American and, eventually, Japanese games to British shores. With links to Ocean and Gremlin, US Gold became one of Britain's best-known and largest videogame companies.



» A casual Geoff Brown contemplates a career which helped shape British videogaming.

In the 1980s, Britain was invaded by America. And the man behind it all was British. From the moment Geoff Brown created US Gold, American game imports flooded the market and the face of videogaming changed forever. David Crookes looks at the impact made by this legendary Birmingham company.

Imagine how much poorer Britain would have been in the 1980s without the joy of American-produced games. For a start, we wouldn't have enjoyed *Impossible Mission*.

Yet had it not been for Geoff Brown, an unsung legend of videogaming, such a scenario could well have existed.

For Geoff was the man behind US Gold, a well-known company which specialised in bringing the best of America to British shores, later going on to cultivate links with major Japanese companies.

Today, we take for granted that we can play games created across the globe, but in the early days of videogaming, the British bedroom programmers were the main source of pixellated enjoyment. And although developers such as Jeff Minter were doing a wonderful job in creating many fresh titles, the gaming world remained insular and fragmented - with many UK coders believing themselves to be at the very forefront of the industry, if only because they were unaware of what was being produced elsewhere.

In 1982, Geoff was a professional musician and a maths teacher at the Leckie School in Wallsall. He had also just bought himself an Atari 800 having become fascinated by computers in the 1960s while working as a programmer on ICL1900s for British Leyland.

Geoff snapped up several British-made computer games but picked up a copy of US magazine Compute! from Woodroffe's music shop in Birmingham, which, at the time, was selling Atari consoles.

He sent cheques to the States for a couple of games featured in the magazine's review section and was amazed by their quality. "They were streets ahead of the UK product," he says.

And then Geoff made a bold move and demonstrated them to the manager of Curry's in Birmingham. "He loved one of them - *Galactic Chase* on cassette," Geoff says. "He said he wanted to sell it and I told him I was the exclusive UK distributor for the game, which was a lie, but he ordered some copies from me."

The game was Geoff's first - and the start of many - lucky breaks.

He says: "I contacted the US software company and ordered 100 copies. I was given an account and credit terms straight away! I brought them in by post having no idea how to clear customs or even how to raise an invoice. I then delivered them to Curry's and they sold out almost immediately and ordered more. At this stage, I had spent nothing except postage. Curry's paid me before I had to pay the States, so I paid the States and ordered more. I was an official distributor! I needed a name and called the company Softcell."

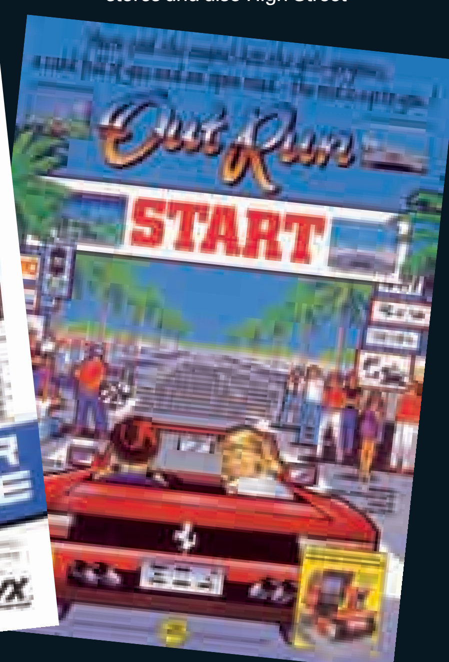
The second lucky break came when the manager at the Birmingham branch of Curry's was promoted to the role of UK buyer for computer games and Geoff was given the commission to supply all British stores. At the same time, an American company called Softcell attempted to sue Geoff for stealing its name - but instead persuaded Brown to change his firm's name, which he did, to CentreSoft Distribution.

By this time, the firm was growing so fast, Geoff gave up his teaching job, despite having just £300 life savings and no business experience. Together with his first wife, Anne, he went full time into distribution. He looked after the products while his wife looked after the business side. CentreSoft Distribution grew at an exponential rate and before long it was Britain's largest games distributor, supplying many independent stores and also High Street



» US Gold was based in this building in Birmingham, where Centresoft ran its distribution business





» The advertising campaign for *OutRun* promised so much, sadly it was nowhere near as good as it could have been

US GOLD

FINEST HOUR

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

In 1986, US Gold literally struck gold with *Impossible Mission*, a true mid-80s classic. In releasing this game in Britain, US Gold allowed even more people to play as Agent 4125 in a bid to defeat evil Professor Elvin Atombender, scouring his underground complex for nuclear missile launch codes.



» Agent 4125's adventure is timeless, check out the making of on page 60

multiples. Initially, the firm sold only Atari games, imported from America and not manufactured or published by CentreSoft.

Then came the Eureka! moment…

In Salt Lake City, Utah, a Mormon development group called Access Software led by programmer Bruce Carver had created a Commodore 64 game called *Beach Head*. Carver was a consulting engineer who had bought a C64 for $800 and had already achieved small success with a graphics utility called *Spritemaster* and a game called *Neutral Zone*.

At the same time as Carver was showing off his new game, Geoff had decided to go to America to visit publishers.

Aged 37, it was his first time in the USA and he wasn't sure what sort of reception he was going to find. "They were all doing great business in America and in I walked from a little island called the UK and asked them for publishing rights to their games," Geoff laughs.

"They really had nothing to lose and only asked for a guaranteed number of unit sales in the year and sometimes a small advance."

When Geoff visited Access, he was stunned. He instantly fell in love with *Beach Head*, snapping up the rights in Britain. He decided it would be the perfect game for his new fledgling company, which was to become known as US Gold.

Geoff says: "*Beach Head* was a revolution. It was streets ahead, quality-wise, of UK games at the time and gave all the British developers a benchmark. It just looked so professional

> "BEACH HEAD WAS A REVOLUTION. IT WAS STREETS AHEAD, QUALITY-WISE, OF UK GAMES AT THE TIME AND GAVE ALL THE BRITISH DEVELOPERS A BENCHMARK. IT JUST LOOKED SO PROFESSIONAL"
>
> GEOFF BROWN

and some UK publishers were actually astounded by it. As soon as I saw it, I knew I would have to grab the rights and since it went on to sell a million units, I was certainly right to do so."

Geoff wanted to do more than merely distribute other company's games. He wanted to publish and market them under a fresh brand, making them available on other computer formats if they were not already.

As a massive music fan, Geoff had envisaged a different kind of videogame publisher. He wanted it to be similar to a music label that had many artists on it. Snapping up *Beach Head* immediately put US Gold on the map and helped it to attract other great games.

In the past it has been pointed out that *Beach Head* did for US Gold what Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells did for Virgin.

But why the name US Gold? During his trip to America, Geoff had also visited Datasoft, Synapse, Cosmi and Epyx ("today it reads like a Who's Who of early games companies," he says). It was during his visit to Cosmi, that he began talking to owner George Johnson, about marketing.

Cosmi had a range of music called Gold Hits and both agreed it was a good name for the collection because it conjured up images of quality. "I must have filed that thought away," Geoff says. "On arriving back in the UK with all these fabulous titles I was convinced I needed a brand to pull them together into a cohesive range. "I remember waking up in the middle of the night with the name 'US Gold – All American Software', a bit like 'All American Boy' and that was it. I dashed off the next morning to our graphic designers and briefed them on it. In early versions of our ads and marketing there was the tag-line 'All American Software', but I soon dropped that in favour of US Gold."

As well as snapping up top games, Geoff made another decision. He put up the price of games.

"Games at the time were selling for around £4 to £5," he says, "and I decided to sell US Gold games at the premium price of £9.99 on cassette and support them with full-page ads in the consumer mags. It changed the whole dynamic of the market at the time."

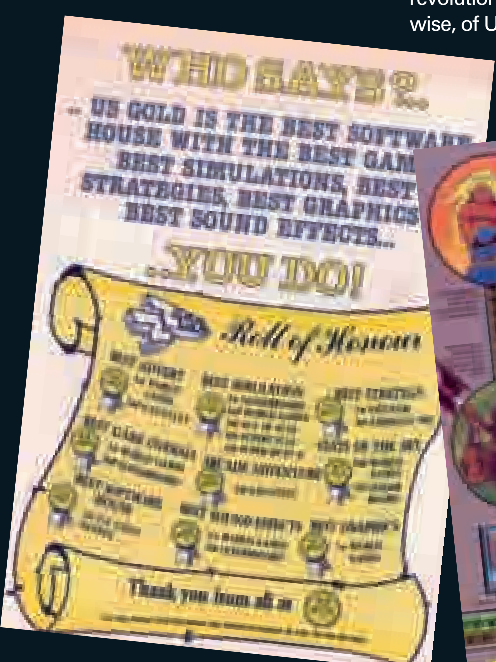
After *Beach Head*, which sold a million copies, Access released two sequels, *Raid Over Moscow* and *Beach Head 3*.

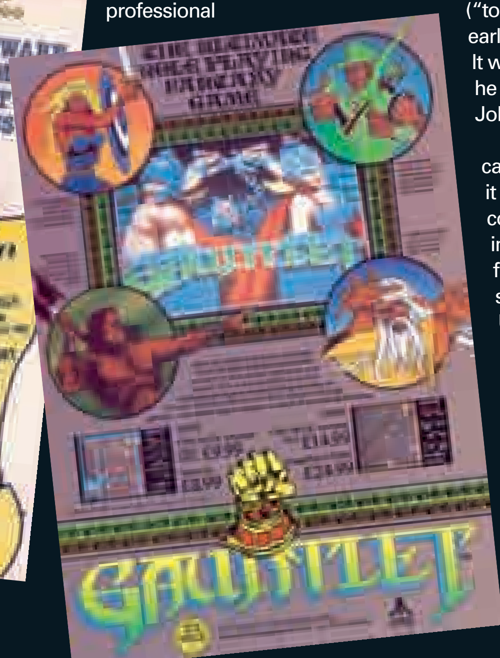
And soon enough US Gold was releasing several great games each month, taking up to 10 pages of advertisements in the leading magazines. It caused a love-hate relationship between the publications and US Gold.

Tim Chaney, US Gold's former managing director, said: "The magazines were very receptive because we were huge advertisers. We didn't 'buy' good reviews but we were quick to call if we felt hard done by, pulling advertising. We fell out with CTW (the No.1 and only trade paper) for a year because we didn't like something they said about us. We were sensitive types. These were still cottage industry times: lots of small developers, small software houses, people coming in with a bang and disappearing soon after. A lot of people were wet behind the ears but giving it their best shot - magazines liked that because they were the same. US Gold was seen as some ugly business machine from Birmingham who played the game with rules it made. There was a lot of resentment; less about our success, more about our attitude. Well, both - you know the English disease."

US Gold had rapidly become the most prolific publisher in Europe, despite having no development resources and relying on licensing titles from the US.

But that had to change. The release of the popular Spectrum 48k machine in 1982 was by now beginning to have a big





» Atari's *Gauntlet* was just one of the many arcade conversions that was released under the US Gold banner, it was actually a good conversion as well.

impact on US Gold since all of its products were for the Atari or Commodore 64.

As the market quickly grew for the Spectrum, an important decision in the growth of US Gold had to be made on how to address that market.

The answer was simple. Geoff says: "I made the decision to convert the games to the Spectrum which meant I needed a development resource and all the management that went with it. CentreSoft had grown to be the largest distribution company in the UK and we stocked and distributed games from all the well known UK publishers.

Apart from Ultimate – Play the Game, which was Spectrum only, our biggest supplier was Ocean Software run by two guys, David Ward and John Woods, out of their offices in Liverpool."

Geoff decided that Ward and Woods had the best resources and expertise to carry out the porting of games to the Spectrum. In return, they were handed a stake in US Gold.

"They accepted that," Geoff says. "Actually, it's a little known fact that some of the early Spectrum conversions of US Gold's titles were in fact programmed through Ocean, and they had an equity stake in US Gold. At first it was a great idea. I got the conversions I needed and the only cost was the share of the company they had, but that situation became problematic in a couple of ways."

It was a bizarre situation. Ocean was US Gold's biggest competitor but was developing the Birmingham-based firm's Spectrum game code. US Gold soon had more titles and licenses than Ocean could cope with.

Geoff says: "There was a major conflict of interest for me and them to really put US Gold at the top of their priorities. At the same time I was Ocean's biggest customer with my distribution company, CentreSoft. It was very convoluted set of relationships. I was, in a way, forced to take the lead and start placing my development with other studios and be independent of Ocean. Looking back, I suppose I should have started straight away with creating my own development team rather than have approached Ocean in the first place, but the speed at which the market was growing meant I could very quickly establish US Gold as a major label on home-grown machines much faster. Also, the relationship with Ocean and their success had benefits to me. We dominated the market for a long time and worked together on ad buying, marketing and compilations - in fact, I think I was the first person in the UK to create and recognise the strength of compilations. There was eventually a very expensive price to pay, several million pounds, to buy them out of US Gold when we went public, but I think it was worth it."

By this time, US Gold had expanded the brands it was representing to Epyx, Access, Datasoft, Cosmi, Microprose, Lucasarts, Synapse, SSI, Origin, Artech (*Ace of Aces*), Accolade, Sydney (*Dambusters*), Arena (Dropzone), Atari Games, Sega, Chris Gray (*Infiltrator*), JV (*Mystic Mansion*), Delphine (*Flashback*), Capcom and many UK developers.

One of the British developers which worked with US Gold was based in a small shop in Sheffield run by Ian Stewart who had a game called *Monty Mole*!



» From games champ to playtester, Simon Hadlington's life was once dominated by US Gold.

LUCKY BREAK

WHEN Zzap!64 carried an advertisement for the US Gold/Boys Club games championship, lads up and down the country jumped with excitement.
And among those who entered was proud Commodore 64 owner Simon Hadlington.
There were local heats up and down the country, and as Simon lived in Stourbridge, this was the heat he went to.
US Gold was local and had a big presence at the championships with the head of communications, Danielle Woodyatt, popping along.
Simon got through the London final after playing *Bionic Commando* on the C64 and *Roadblasters* on the Spectrum but lost in the final… to illustrious and well-known journalist Stuart Campbell.
But Simon says: "On the back of this I got a job at US Gold as a playtester and Stuart and I were asked to go to Paris for the 1989 European Games championships with Julian Rignall and Paul Glancey, and soundly beat the French, Italians, Germans and Dutch.
"Being offered the job at US Gold was unbelievable. My mates at school were really jealous. Playing games for a living was great."
After working for US Gold during a gap year at Swansea University, Simon was offered a job as a producer in 1991 but turned it down in favour of returning to university. He continued to playtest for the publisher, however, roping in his uni mates to help.
"I do often wonder what would have happened should I have accepted the job," he says.



» "To me, it was a war. I didn't want anyone else to exist": Tim Chaney looks back at his role as US Gold commander.

Q&A

TIM CHANEY

(EX-MANAGING DIRECTOR OF US GOLD)

Tim Chaney joined US Gold as general manager in February 1985. CND were picketing the building because of *Raid Over Moscow* at the time ("I remember it well," he says. "It was snowing). In the Summer of 1986, he became managing director. Tim worked on every US Gold game between February 1985 and April 1989. On many titles, he licensed the game, found the coders, planned the marketing and hit the sales budgets.

Retro Gamer: How would you rate US Gold's American-produced games in comparison to those made in Britain?
Tim Chaney: Generally the US games were higher quality than were being produced in the UK: *Beach Head*, *Raid Over Moscow*, *Summer Games*, *Winter Games*, *Microprose Flight Sims*, *Super Cycle*, *Dambusters*, *Leaderboard*, *Bruce Lee* and *Spy Hunter* immediately come to mind.

RG: How influential do you perceive US Gold to have been?
TC: Well, at its peak we represented the output of nearly 80 per cent of the US publishing output (Broderbund, Activision and EA were exceptions), but to continue to grow we expanded the business to coin-op conversions teaming up with Atari Games (*Gauntlet*, *720°*, *Road Runner* etc.), Sega (*OutRun*, *Thunderblade*) and Capcom (*Street Fighter* etc.).
In that time, US Gold became the biggest publisher in Europe, eclipsing Ocean and BT, and Centresoft became the biggest distributor in the UK having Menzies and Boots as exclusive accounts.

RG: What was it like working for Geoff and Anne?
TC: Geoff was an ideas guy, Anne the iron rod and numbers person. I was the operations guy who did most of the licensing, especially the Japanese coin-op stuff, all the marketing and managed the sales team. We were way ahead of our time in our strategy, marketing, aggression and arrogance. To me, it was a war. I didn't want anyone else to exist. We were ruthless.

RG: What was the most fun aspect of the company?
TC: All the fun, for me, was about winning: front covers, great reviews, Gallup No.1's and being competitive and in 1985, 1986 and 1987 we were smoking. By 1988 I had an infrastructure around me and delegated a lot of things I used to do myself. I became bored with everything except power. I left in April 1989, set up my own publisher, Tecmagik, and then took over Virgin and grew it from $1m in 1991 to $200m by 1995 and was back at the top again, more mature and without most of the arrogance.

RG: And the worst?
TC: Often we would take lots of crap games from US publishers, not because we wanted them but to stop anyone else getting a foot in the door - remember *Zorro*, *Time Tunnel*, *BC II Grog's Revenge*, *Beyond The Forbidden Forest*, *Superstar Ping Pong*, *The Goonies* and everything from Strategic Simulations Inc? Thought not. And of course, there was *World Cup Carnival*…



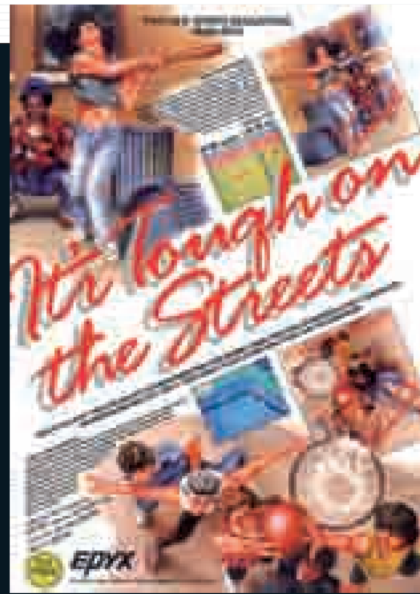
» *Impossible Mission* and *Winter Games* were just a few of Epyx's hits

COMPANY PROFILE

US GOLD



CND vigil at US Gold





» Sure the ads may look dated, but there's no denying the impact that companies like Epyx made in the UK

THIS IS A RAID

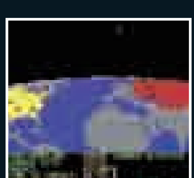
US Gold didn't just grab the attention of the computer press - at times, the national newspapers were interested in what was happening at Geoff Brown's company.

The most controversial game was *Raid Over Moscow*, the sequel to *Beach Head*, which worried the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

The CND's chairman Bruce Kent had sleepness nights over ROM's content, which swapped the usual gaming fare of blasting aliens for nuking Russians in the Kremlin.

Not that Geoff Brown, who had brought the game to Britain from America, was too concerned. "A well-adjusted child is able to differentiate fantasy from reality," he said at the time. Nevertheless, the game was later rebranded to Raid when placed on the compilation History In The Making - The First Three Years.

Equally controversially, this 15-game anthology retailed for £24.99, which didn't go down too well in the computer press.



» The Red Army is in sight in one of the most controversial games ever made.

Stewart wanted to publish the game through his own publishing company, Gremlin Graphics. Geoff loved the product and took a stake in the company and the game went on to become a massive hit.

Geoff says: "At one point, I owned the majority of Gremlin and sold it back to Ian for a nominal sum, who by then had married my sales manager and became a very good friend. He went on to float that company and become a millionaire in the process."

US Gold continued to base itself in Birmingham in a building linked to CentreSoft's warehouse but it would later expand across Europe and the world.

The development and testing department was on the ground floor where the production and PR people were also located. And production came to be managed by a down to earth chap called Bob Kenrick who looked after returned games that didn't load and the physical production of games onto tape or disk. The duplication of both US Gold and a lot of other companies' games was carried out at Ablex based in Telford, near Wolverhampton, where they also used to press most of the country's 7-inch singles.

Testing and development was managed by Tony Porter and Bob Armour (who created the original Spectrum version of *Gauntlet*) and later Steve Fitton.

And for people such as Simon Hadlington, a playtester for US Gold, there was no finer place to work.

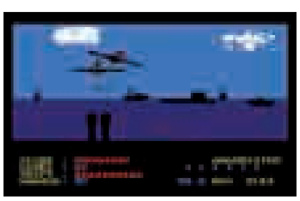
He said: "No programming was done on-site, just mostly in peoples' own homes, with the exception of a few teams such as Tiertex (a large converted house in Didsbury, Manchester), Probe (a small office in Croydon), Creative Materials (an office in Bury) and Climax (a small office in Fareham). Testing happened predominantly on-site at US Gold or sat right next to the developers, wherever they were based. The latter was used both at the start and at the end of projects, particularly where timescales were tight."

The next step in US Gold's development almost came by default. Most Spectrum games had been conversions from their US originals, but the arcade market was massive and Geoff had developed connections through his visits to Japan with Capcom and Sega.

There weren't any original computer versions of the coin-op games, so Geoff decided to convert them in the UK to British formats.

"That was the beginning of a long string of coin-op hits like *OutRun*, *Gauntlet*, *720°*, and *Street Fighter*, which sold millions of units," he said. "At the same time, I brought some of the development in-house as a US Gold development group and finally started to create original games and games based on events, personalities, movies, television and brands. We were innovating like mad on everything we did as there were no precedents in those days. We were creating them as we went along."

GAMES REVIEWS



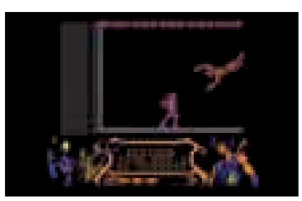
BEACH HEAD

ACCESS SOFTWARE, 1983

» *Beach Head*, billed as the ultimate war game, had you penetrating enemy defences in a number of battles utilising air, sea and land forces. You could take the enemy by surprise or attack head on. And the choice of single or multi-player made for a varied, fun game.

It boasted great graphics and good sound effects, and was an enjoyable blast.

65%



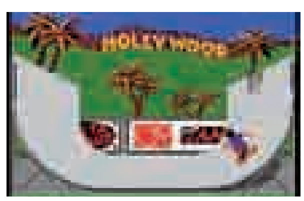
STRIDER

CAPCOM, 1989

» A great fast action platformer that was converted onto home machines by Tiertex. The home versions did a great job of capturing the spirit of the original game, even if they didn't look or sound quite as good…

A favourite of our editor, Strider was a multi-load game on some formats which meant many frustrating waits. But it was worth it to play this undoubted classic.

85%



CALIFORNIA GAMES

EPYX, 1987

» While Ocean had Daley Thompson Supertest Games, US Gold was synonymous with the Olympics.

It's deal with Epyx saw it import many multi-sport event games from America including *California Games* which featured skateboarding, BMX racing, roller skating, foot bag, surfing and flying disc. A solid conversion that eventually became a huge hit on the later console systems.

70%



FINAL FIGHT

CAPCOM, 1991

» Sadly, by trying to stay faithful to the coin-op original this conversion of *Final Fight* was a bit of a disappointment.

Nevertheless, its graphics were impressively large and colourful with massive sprites and smooth scrolling. Interestingly, to save manufacturing costs, one version had the Spectrum game on one side of a 3-inch disc and the Amstrad one on the other.

65%



» *Beach Head* on the C64 was an immediate hit for US Gold and was soon ported to other systems

" US GOLD WAS ONE OF THE TOP PUBLISHERS IN THOSE DAYS SO EVERYONE WANTED TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THEM AND IT MEANT THEY GOT THE BEST GAMES, EVEN FROM THE BIG DEVELOPERS LIKE CAPCOM AND SEGA"

DANIELLE WOODYATT

After many games and licenses and millions of lines of code, US Gold had become one of the biggest brands in the UK games market and CentreSoft became the biggest distributor.

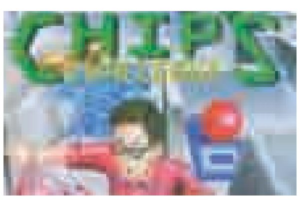
US Gold offices were opened throughout Europe and then in the USA and Japan. Several entrepreneur millionaires were created along the way and many key managers and companies that are still in the business today formed.

Danielle Woodyatt was a former head of communications for US Gold and now runs LunchPR. She said: "US Gold was one of the top publishers in those days so everyone wanted to be associated with them and it meant they got the best games, even from the big developers like Capcom and Sega. US Gold was the first company to bring LucasArts and Westwood into Europe and we had great ties with Sega - one title that was a major success was *OutRun*. The firm was proud of sourcing the best overseas software, with Geoff Brown being the first person to bring products in from America. The company had his first invoice on the wall in reception!"

In 1993, there was a public flotation of US Gold and the firm went on to acquire Core Design, makers of Tomb Raider. US Gold was eventually sold to Eidos in 1997 which subsequently dropped the name but CentreSoft remains and is still the UK's largest games distributor.

Geoff now lives in West Hollywood, Los Angeles, and is still enjoying the entertainment business. Last August, he was appointed to the board of ITVN, which pioneering the delivery of television on demand via the internet. He is also the chairman of a new UK application publishing company, JDP Software, and ILM, a company focused on the sourcing of licenses for the games industry. And, if that wasn't enough, he is on the Board of Gusto Games which develops Championship Manager for Eidos on consoles.

He said: "My only regret with US Gold was staying around when we were a public company. I was just never really cut out for the corporate life and enjoyed the more creative and entrepreneurial side of the games business. To tell the truth, in the end it actually became a bit of a chore, a conveyor belt that I really couldn't step off, even though looking back, it was great fun." He added: "When I look back, it was clear that US Gold had continued success because we ended up becoming the biggest brand. Ultimately, it was better to be with us than compete against us."



CHIPS CHALLENGE

EPYX, 1989

» A big hit on the Atari Lynx, this tile-based puzzle game saw you play as Nerdy Chip who was desperate to join Melinda the Mental Marvel's "Bit Busters" computer club.
Chip had to prove his worth to Melinda by completing 150 difficult levels, using keys, shields, and special shoes.
A great little puzzler that's been criminally overlooked.
85%



LEADERBOARD

ACCESS, 1986

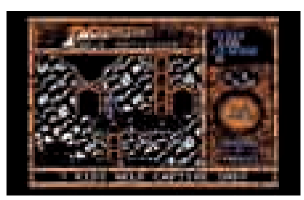
» Although there have been many, many great golf games since, *Leaderboard* stands out for being the first accurate representation.
This magnificent golfing sim was easy to play, yet had a level of complexity depending on whether you chose to tee off as a novice, amateur or professional, in turn adding greater control over the shot or making you battle with wind directions. Brilliant.
90%



GAUNTLET

GREMLIN, 1986

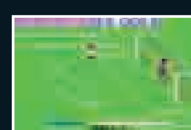
» This coin-op hit stood head and shoulders above many in the mid 80s. Negotiating its 501 levels was tough and sadly, became more boring as you progressed, but there was no faulting the ambition of the conversion across the many formats it appeared on.
Teamwork and co-operation were important and the game struck such a chord, it spawned many a clone. None as good as the original however.
88%



INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM

LUCASARTS, 1985

»Enticing LucasArts on board was a coup for US Gold and the popular Indiana Jones was a perfect money-spinner.
Unfortunately, as with many licenses, the game was quite poor with annoying music and a basic first level which didn't make you want to play much further. Those that did found the final level to go on and on and on...
50%



» An utter travesty of a game that deserved every low score it received.

AVOID LIKE THE PLAGUE

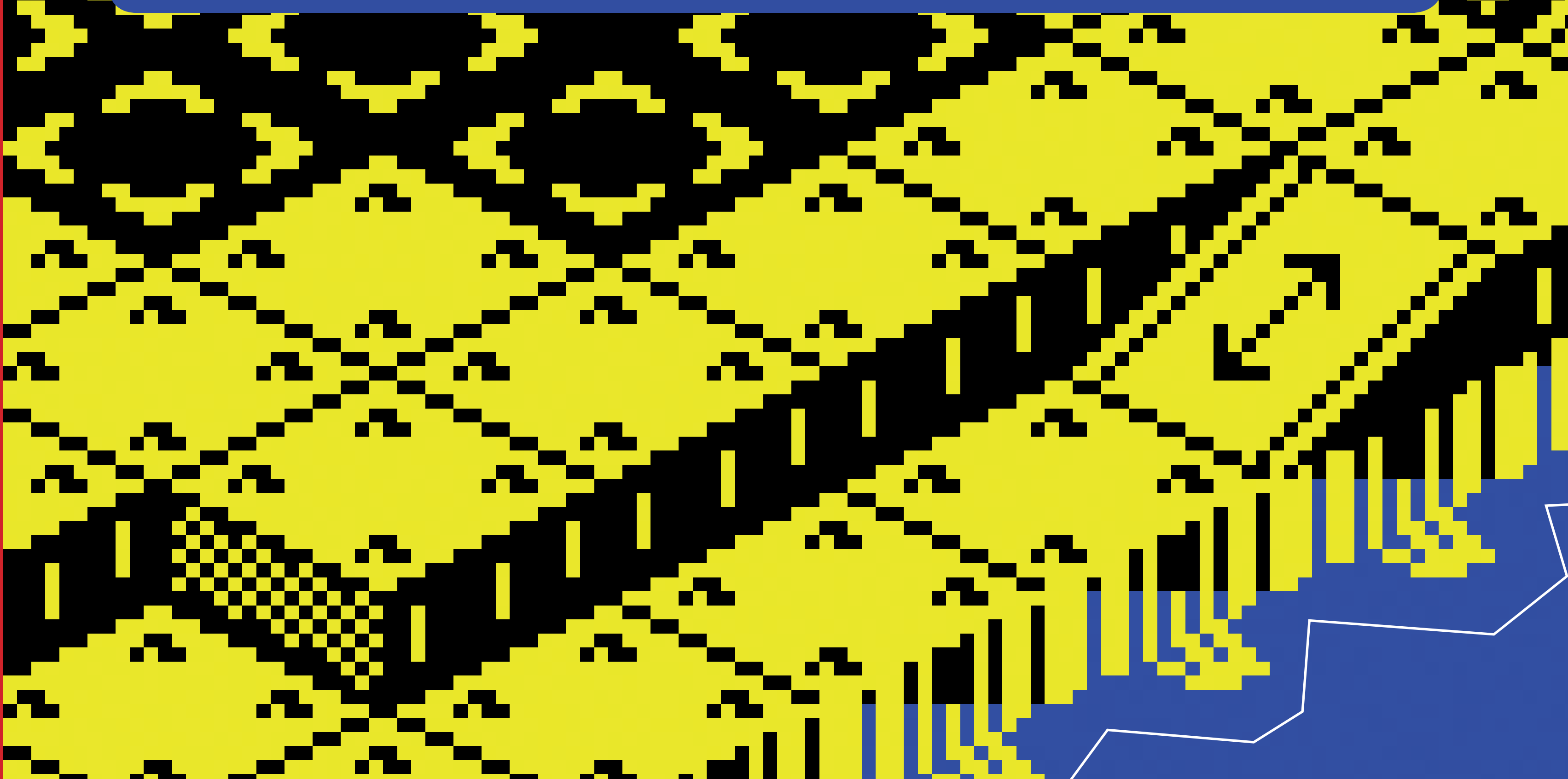
WORLD CUP CARNIVAL

US Gold's biggest embarrassment was World Cup Carnival - Amstrad Action gave it 0%.
This official Mexico '86 World Cup was identical to Artic's terrible World Cup Football from 1984, only repackaged with posters and a badge. It was sold for £9.95 - £2 more than the original! Shocking stuff!

THE MAKING OF…

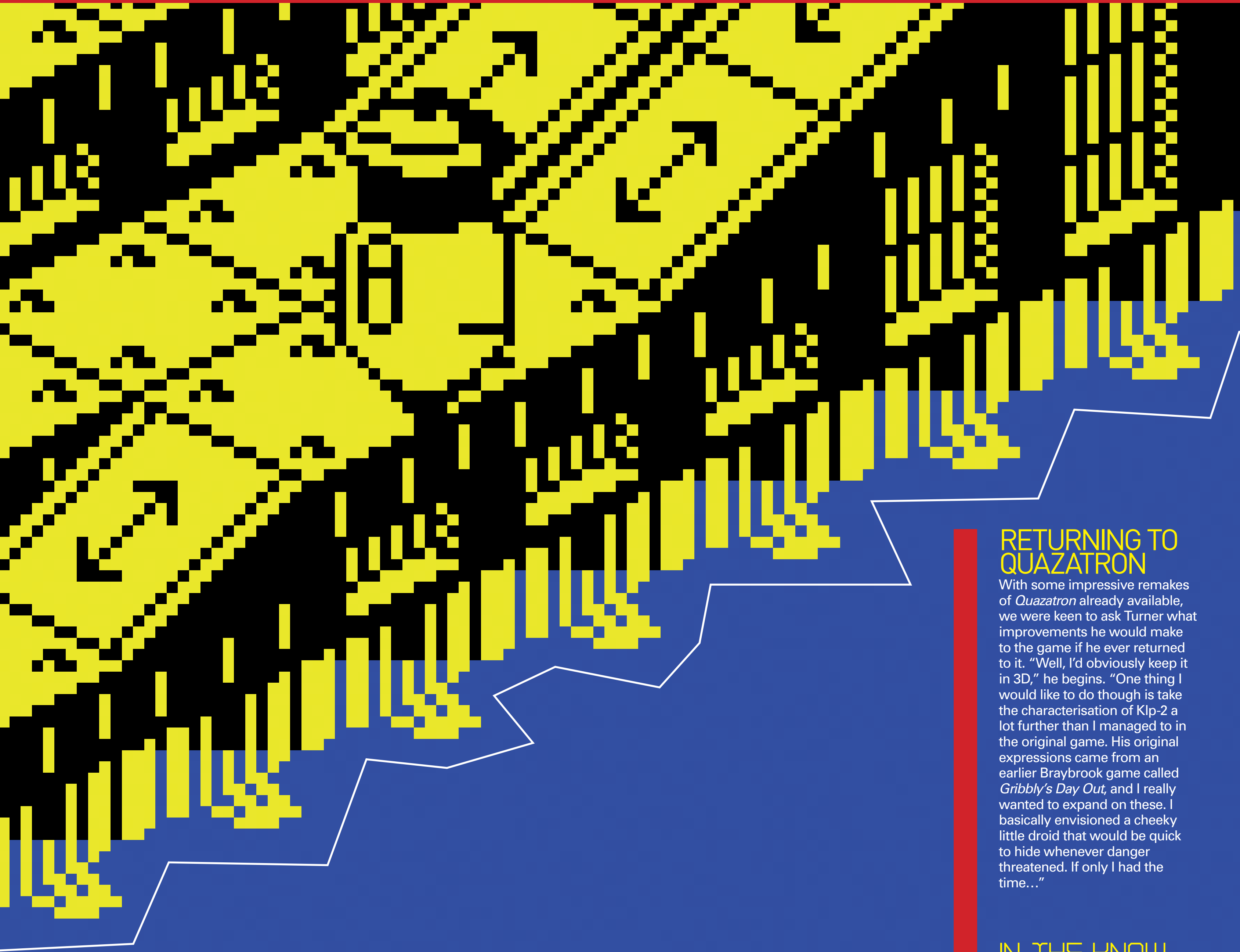
QUAZATRON

Never mind the fact that the main character was created over a couple of pints, or that much of the actual gameplay was heavily borrowed from a popular Commodore 64 hit, Steve Turner's *Quazatron* remains so popular that its still being remade today. Retro Gamer takes time out to talk to Turner about his fascinating isometric hit.



With Sandy White's *Ant Attack* and the Stamper Brothers' 3D adventures presenting Spectrum owners with a fascinating new way of playing games, it was hardly surprising that a raft of copycat clones quickly followed. Unlike many of its peers though, Steve Turner's excellent *Quazatron* was a little different from the norm and delivered a title that was refreshingly new to many other Spectrum titles.

"I started off writing a routine to construct the 3D backdrop," begins Turner when we question him about *Quazatron's* origins. "I wanted a better graphical look than my last games [*Astroclone* and *Dragontorc*], so I started from scratch



RETURNING TO QUAZATRON

With some impressive remakes of *Quazatron* already available, we were keen to ask Turner what improvements he would make to the game if he ever returned to it. "Well, I'd obviously keep it in 3D," he begins. "One thing I would like to do though is take the characterisation of Klp-2 a lot further than I managed to in the original game. His original expressions came from an earlier Braybrook game called *Gribbly's Day Out*, and I really wanted to expand on these. I basically envisioned a cheeky little droid that would be quick to hide whenever danger threatened. If only I had the time…"

"THE SPECTRUM WAS NOT VERY GOOD AT PUTTING GRAPHICS ON THE SCREEN, SO YOU HAD TO ESSENTIALLY OPTIMISE THE CODE BY USING EVERY TRICK IN THE BOOK THAT WAS AVAILABLE TO YOU, AND QUITE A FEW THAT WEREN'T…

to produce a 3D scene from a 2D map. I decided to avoid having hidden views, as that was problematic in both programming and gameplay. That gave me a map that was a bit like half of a Ziggurat. Indeed, I was actually going to originally call the game Ziggurat, but I had no idea at the time what sort of characters were going to be in the finished product. Hewson wanted a Spectrum version of *Paradroid*, but I just didn't think it would work without the smooth scrolling that was possessed by the Commodore64. Still, I took the gameplay from *Paradroid* and put it on my existing background, and *Quazatron* was the end result."

Although his earlier titles, *Avalon* and *Dragontorc*, had both received deserved Crash Smashes, frustratingly for Turner he never actually got to finish his planned trilogy. "Hewson had persuaded me that it was not worth a third part to my planned trilogy, so I instead did a sci-fi version called *Astroclone*. Sadly, it didn't sell at all well so I needed a quick game to bring in some money," he readily admits. "Re-using the gameplay from *Paradroid* was far quicker than inventing a brand new game, and some of the actual routines were directly converted from the original Commodore 64 code."

Paradroid had been a huge success on the C64, and while Turner still wasn't too convinced about whether the Spectrum would be up to the task, he at least had a firm idea of the direction that Ziggurat/*Quazatron* would now be taking; with the seeds sown it was simply a case of allowing them to grow. All in all, *Quazatron* took a grand total of six months to complete, and while the turnaround was very quick, it wasn't without its delays. "The biggest problem I faced was trying to make the push scroll fast enough," Turner explains. "It had to build a vertical strip of the 3D landscape that meant a complicated scan of the map and translation into sprite graphics. The Spectrum was not very good at putting graphics on the screen, so you had to essentially optimise the code by using every trick in

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** HEWSON CONSULTANTS

» **DEVELOPER:** STEVE TURNER

» **RELEASED:** 1986

» **GENRE:** PUZZLE/ADVENTURE

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+



THE MAKING OF… QUAZATRON

the book that was available to you, and quite a few that weren't…"

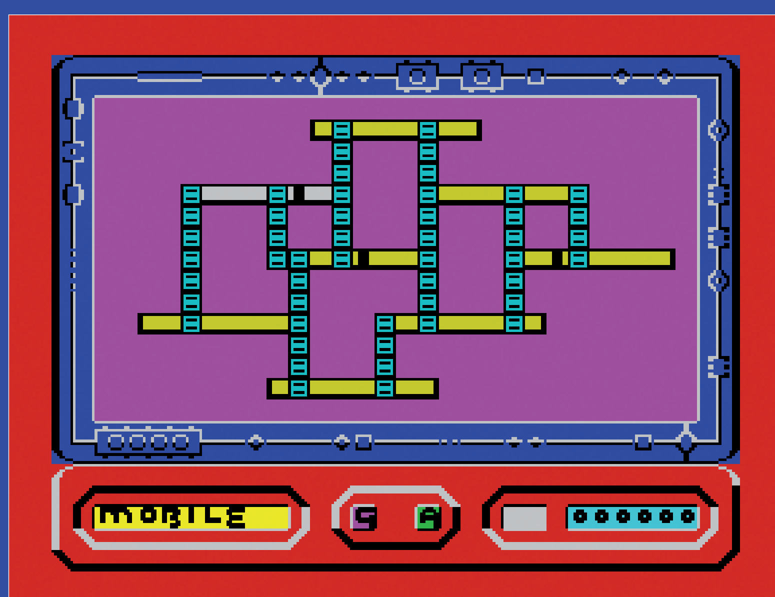
Despite various problems and his short timeframe, Turner soldiered on with his game; a desire to make *Quazatron* a success fuelled his inspiration even further.

"With *Quazatron* I really needed to catch the attention of the various game magazines," he continues. It was essential to me that *Quazatron* received a good review, as my last game had bombed. I re-engineered my graphic routines and decided to trade building the whole screen each frame to get more graphics in the background. The droids were plotted in a mini buffer on top of a copy of the background in front to back order, then that part of the screen was copied to the main display with a highly optimised piece of code. This was one of the things that I enjoyed so much about coding; there was absolutely nothing to help you on the Spectrum but the Z80 and your own ingenuity. Although, if I'm totally honest, the best feeling you get when creating a game is the moment when it all seems to come together, and you know it's now a game and is no longer a program. Sometimes that can happen in an instant, other times it's a gradual uphill struggle – but there's always a moment when you reach the top, and you find yourself playing your game rather than programming it. Andrew and I had great fun working together at the time of *Quazatron*. It was a period of creativity, where ideas sparked into life like a chain reaction."

One difference that made *Quazatron* stand out from other similar Spectrum titles at the time was the different weapons that main character Klp-2 had access to. While they added greatly to the final gameplay, their inclusion was initially for a totally different motive… "The main reason why I wanted to add to the *Paradroid* weaponry was so that I could make use of the 3D space that I had created. I thought about how to use gravity, and started off by adding mortars. Adding a bounce gave a nice effect and an extra weapon for little extra coding, while including the frisbee and a boomerang just seemed to add to *Quazatron's* flavour. I was keen to get as much fun into the game as possible, and I think I succeeded. Interestingly, *Quazatron* is also one of the few games that I've worked on where I knew where everything was going. I suppose that was because the gameplay had already been working so well in *Paradroid*, I didn't want to upset the fine-tuning of the game."

With *Quazatron's* visuals and gameplay all in place, it was simply a case of thinking up a name and history for the main character. Interestingly, inspiration was found at the bottom of a glass down Turner's local. "Yeah, I made the character up one Friday night whilst having a brew," laughs Turner. "I loved the idea of having an anti-hero, as it seemed hilarious at the time. Klp-2 was basically short for kleptomaniac, but the actual character was more like a kid who liked taking everything to bits but could never put them back together again; and in a way, I suppose that's exactly like I was."

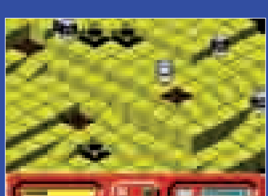
Quazatron was finally completed in 1986, and immediately went on to receive rave reviews from practically every magazine it featured in. Sinclair User's Chris Bourne regarded it as being 'one of the most refreshing games I've seen in months, while Your Sinclair's Phil South simply stated that it was 'totally brilliant'. Of course reviewers were quick to point out that it shared many similarities with 1985's *Paradroid*, but Turner still feels that both games still contain their own unique merits. "*Paradroid* stands out because it was custom designed for the Commodore 64, he explains. "Whereas *Quazatron* was designed from the ground up for the Spectrum. Each game uses the



» This simple, yet effective map made travel through *Quazatron's* various stages a cinch

NEW LOOK, SAME GAME

Like many other popular 8-bit titles, Turner's *Quazatron* has received a fair number of remakes, including a rather impressive version made entirely in Flash by Bitshifter. Our favourite, however, is the version that's been created by Matt Smith, and can be found at popular remake site, Retrospec. Smith's update perfectly captures the spirit of the original game, and is worth playing if you're a fan of the original Spectrum hit. While Turner has yet to play the game himself, he's more than happy with Smith's creation. "When I first wrote *Quazatron* I thought it would be forgotten in a few months, as that's how long games were lasting then," he admits. "It's really interesting that there are people out there who want to recreate it, and while I haven't played any of the updated versions, I do plan to as soon as I have some spare time."





» Once you've taken care of all the droids on a chosen level the screen goes dark, prompting you to move to the next stage

source machine to the maximum of its capabilities. Andrew Braybrook and myself have always strongly believed that you should never just port any game, and in this respect, *Quazatron* was no different."

While each game did have plenty of unique features that made them stand apart from each other, one key gameplay mechanic that was shared by both games was the ability to grapple opposing droids. Turner borrowed the concept from *Paradroid*, but then again he was the one who bought it to Braybook's attention in the first place. "Andrew wanted some kind of takeover sequence in *Paradroid* so the player could be any of the droids," continues Turner. "I was looking for game ideas at the time, and was playing around with some freebies that had come with one of the Spectrums I had. There was a circuit diagram program, and the graphics in it had a clean, hi-tech look. It was a look that I was keen to get into *Paradroid*, as it was meant to be a futuristic computer display rather than an actual view of the ship. We played about with the idea of a complicated electronic circuit, where the player could change the components to win the control of the targeted droid. Andrew basically took that idea and simplified it to the fast action grapple game that eventually featured in *Paradroid*."

Quazatron may have taken its gameplay mechanics from another title, but it still left reviewers delighted and easily stood apart from many similar games. While Turner admits that *Quazatron's* gameplay was important to its overall success, he feels that its impressive visuals were equally important. "What you had was a game that contained the gameplay of *Paradroid*, yet looked like an advanced Spectrum title, and for many, that was a winning combination," he explains. "Many people will often try to argue that graphics do not matter if there is good gameplay in place, but in truth the game would not get played in the first place if it was not attractive enough to get past buyers, reviewers and the end player, who chooses a game from a static picture in a magazine or a game box."

Even with all of *Quazatron's* success, it was never actually converted to any other home systems. There were no conspiracies or mysterious reasons as to why this happened, it was just a lack of resources. "To be honest, Andrew and myself simply didn't have the capacity to convert many games," admits Turner. "While the Commodore 64 was an obvious choice for *Quazatron*, we didn't go ahead as it was far too similar to *Paradroid*. [Andrew] Hewson always encouraged us to write original material and said that he would arrange any conversions that were to take place, and while he did do a few such as *Dragontorc* on the Amstrad, they were usually ports that lacked the quality we



OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES:
Magnatron 1988

had put into the original games."

Regardless of *Quazatron's* origins, there can be no denying that it remains a thoroughly enjoyable game to play through – although the scrolling seems even more painfully slow than we originally remembered it to be. Despite this small niggle, *Quazatron* remains a wonderful addition to the Spectrum's library and is still a blast to play. "It has a fine balance of gameplay that makes it easy to start playing but difficult to master," he explains on the reasoning behind *Quazatron's* enduring success. "To me, that's the secret of a really good game."



» The different numbers on each droid show how powerful they are, and how hard they are to grapple

"MANY PEOPLE WILL OFTEN TRY TO ARGUE THAT GRAPHICS DO NOT MATTER IF THERE IS GOOD GAMEPLAY IN PLACE, BUT IN TRUTH THE GAME WOULD NOT GET PLAYED IN THE FIRST PLACE IF IT WAS NOT ATTRACTIVE ENOUGH



» Some levels are jam-packed with droids, so great care needs to be taken when traversing the well-designed stages



» Log in to an available terminal and you can instantly access an overview of the current stage. Very handy…



» While the visuals in *Quazatron* were very impressive, the slow scrolling took a fair amount of time to get used to



THEY SAID:

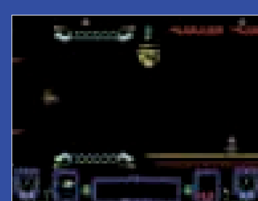
"THIS IS DEFINITELY ONE GAME THAT WILL KEEP YOU AT YOUR SPECTRUM FOR MONTHS"
CRASH

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

AVALON
SYSTEMS: SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1984

ZYNAPS
SYSTEMS: SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1987

RANA RAMA
SYSTEMS: SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1987





STREET FIGHTER II TURBO

RETURN OF THE KING



- **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM
- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SNES
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £6+



HISTORY

Regular forum visitors will no doubt be aware that I don't exactly have a lot of love for Capcom's seminal brawler. Don't get me wrong. I'm fully aware of its historical importance and realise that plenty of people still play it on a regular basis (last year's visit to the Retro Ball was all the proof you needed) but after witnessing the glorious choreography of *Street Fighter 3: Third Strike*, its older peer appeared to have nothing new to offer. How wrong I was…

Thanks to Capcom, and more importantly, Xbox Live arcade, I've been able to re-discover the joy of *Street Fighter II*, or more specifically, *Street Fighter II' Hyper Fighting* (or *Turbo* as it's known to us Brits). While the original *Street Fighter II* remains a slow, turgid experience (sorry guys, but it's true) *Turbo* gives the game a much-needed boost of speed and ensures that bouts are always satisfying to play. New costumes, extra moves and re-designed backdrops were just a few of the additions that Capcom included and I still have the cool metal tin that it was lovingly packaged in.

While later titles have presented us with more character choices than ever, ridiculous specials and the beauty that is parrying, there's still something immensely satisfying about a no-nonsense round of *Turbo*. There's no need to worry about pulling off double fireball motions, you won't moan over the cheapness of *Third Strike's* Chun-Li and Ken, you can just concentrate on mastering the good old fashioned art of beating the hell out of each other. Sure the character models look a little old-fashioned now and the animation has lost a lot of its slickness over the years, but even with these niggles (and that's all they really are) *Turbo's* gameplay remains resoundingly solid.

I'll still drop this latest incarnation of *Street Fighter II* as soon as Microsoft gets around to emulating the superior *Third Strike* for the 360, but in the meantime I'll be rekindling my love for one of Capcom's greatest fighters.


KO
63
RYU

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?



GARY LIDDON

DATAFILE

NAME: GARY LIDDON
DATE OF BIRTH: 16 JANUARY 1967
FIRST JOB: SMURFETTE
CURRENTLY: PROGRAMMER, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, DJ
FAVOURITE FILM: APOCALYPSE NOW



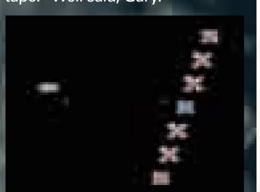
» Relaxing after a hard day's coding...

HE BEGAN AS A WRITER ON ZZAP! 64, CO-FOUNDED LEGENDARY C64 DEVELOPER THALAMUS AND COLLABORATED ON NUMEROUS 8 AND 16-BIT GAMES THROUGHOUT THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES. ONCE A BIGWIG AT CLIMAX STUDIOS AND NOW A CRAZYWIG FOR A BELOVED DEVELOPER OF YORE THAT IS CONFIDENTLY ENTERING THE WORLD OF NEXT-GEN CONSOLES, GARY LIDDON'S THUMBS ARE UNDERSTANDABLY PERMANENTLY ALOFT...

YOU MUST PLAY...

Delta

The beefed up sequel to *Sanxion* remains one of Liddon's highpoints, as this solid shooter features a prime example of his desire to link gameplay with music – if you don't die, you can gauge your progress from the soundtrack. It also includes the Mix-E-Load system, which allowed you to mix your own version of the game's music while it loaded. "I always thought the experience should start at the point of you pressing play on the tape." Well said, Gary.



I first met Gary at last year's Classic Gaming Expo in London. He was earnestly haggling over an Atari *Centipede* Halloween costume, promising that if the bemused vendor sold it to him, his mate would soon be rampaging through the venue dressed in said garb in a moving mushroom-fuelled recreation of Level 39. Gary struck me as being hugely enthusiastic about videogaming, always up for a laugh and slightly pissed. A revealing first impression?

"That's pretty accurate," Gary acknowledges. "You've got a prime slice of me there."

Gary's sense of theatre helped him secure his first job – as a Smurfette in Uxbridge. Sadly, the blond wig and blue skin couldn't compensate for the dreary leaflet-distributing role, but Father Abraham's loss was to be our gain, as Gary was inspired to enter the world of computing by another seventies icon.

"I saw an advert on the back of a DC Comic which had Superman walking into a Tandy shop and being shown how to programme. 10 PRINT "SUPERMAN" 20 GOTO 10. I knew that's what I wanted to be. A programmer. Or Superman."

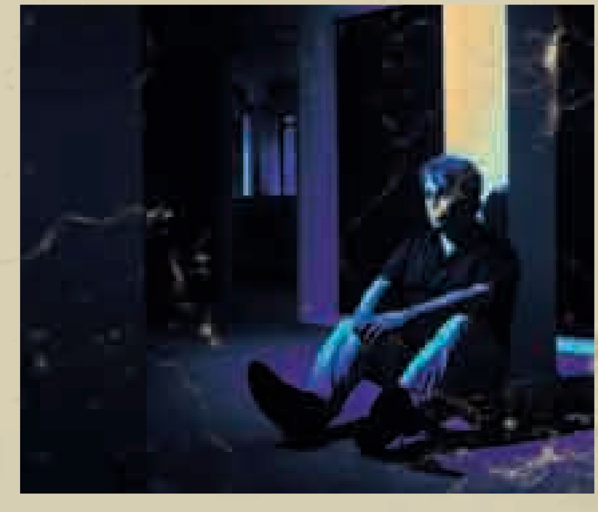
Gary certainly seemed to believe he possessed superhuman powers. On acquiring his first micro, an Acorn Atom, he eschewed the manual's introduction to BASIC and turned straight to the blue pages - clearly marked 'For advanced users only' – which spoke in a mysterious language called Machine Code. "I thought f*ck it, I'll go for that. It was like the book was taunting me. I never did any BASIC programming and just went straight into assembler."

It was this spirit of adventure, mixed with a little Del Boy-esque entrepreneurial nous absorbed from a childhood in London where money was tight, which set Gary on his journey into the games industry. He used his coding skills to hack commercial releases, thus allowing handy 'back-up copies' and became a popular visitor to the houses of mates with BBC Micros and Spectrums. He fell in with a group of C64 hackers who specialised in cracking games from America. In the days before US Gold, these titles were frequently unavailable in the UK and Gary capitalised on their rarity by touting them round videogame magazines.

"I'd go to C&VG, Personal Computer Games and loads of others and swap them for games they'd finished with. They would get to review games that weren't even out yet and then I'd take the originals back to Boots and give 'em all 'Oh, I bought this and it's for the Speccy and I've got a 64... Can I have my money back, please?' It was a nice little earner..."

His initiative paid further dividends when during a deal at Big K magazine, the editor Tony Tyler – 'awesome bloke, real stoner' – suggested Gary just review the games





» **Left:** The first release from Thalamus - the Stavros Fasoulas penned *Sanxion* **Right:** Gary regretted getting Stavros that crate of Blue Bols...

himself and bring back 300 words later. Thus almost by accident, Gary had gone from hacker to hack and all by the age of seventeen. "It was an awesome time,' he fondly recalls. 'Fantastic bunch of people."

A short spell at software house Domark followed, initially as an office boy. After spending much of his time answering calls from frustrated punters demanding how the hell they were supposed to play the company's flagship title *Eureka!*, he got a taste of the technical side of software

"STAVROS WAS ADAMANT ABOUT CALLING SANXION RAINBOW WARRIOR. I SAID, 'MATE, YOU CAN'T – THE FRENCH HAVE JUST BLOWN UP A GREENPEACE BOAT CALLED THAT." GARY LIDDON

development. He worked on the disk version of *A View To A Kill* and even managed to brighten up his working day by inserting a hidden scrolling message insulting his former Big K nemesis Tony Takeshi.

A visit by Jeremy Spencer of publishers Newsfield to the Domark offices to preview a game resulted in Gary being enticed back into games journalism. He accepted a job on their Amstrad title Amtix and did some reviewing for Crash before falling in with Gary Penn and Julian Rignall at Zzap!64 and joining the magazine officially for Issue 7. His memories of that time are hazy and mainly revolve around the daily pub lunches, with repeat sessions in the evening after work, but he feels sure some game reviewing was done in between.

"I actually found writing incredibly painful," confesses Gary, the alcohol clearly required purely to relieve the agony. "I think I said some funny stuff at times but my reviews were definitely the worst written. I hadn't planned to be a games journalist and it's not what I wanted to do. What I did really like was interviewing programmers – Andrew Braybrook, Archer Maclean, Jeff Minter - and getting to ask 'em, 'How did you do that, then?' I learned so much really useful stuff."



» Gary at Zzap!64, presumably checking the clock to see if the pubs were open yet...

Coding and creating remained Gary's first love, yet it was his involvement with Newsfield that allowed this to flourish. Whilst manning the Zzap!64 stand at a PCW show in 1986, a young aspiring Finnish programmer approached the team and presented the prototype of a mightily impressive shoot-'em-up. Gary could see the potential. With financial backing from Newsfield, Thalamus Limited was born and Gary was installed as Technical Director, alongside Andrew Wright, former Activision PR manager, as MD. The first release was to be the fully developed version of that promising shooter from the Finn Stavros Fasoulas, but not before Gary needed to have a quiet word about the title…

"Stav was adamant about calling it Rainbow Warrior. I said, 'Mate, you can't – the French have just blown up a Greenpeace boat called that.' He really didn't want to change it and made out it was too late to change the character set. He even went so far as to call it Wobniar Warrior. Christ."

Gary sagely advised that *Sanxion* might work better and the fledging software house had a hit, soon followed by the even more sophisticated sequel *Delta*. Whilst Stavros handled all the programming, Gary contributed much to the Thalamus brand – the distinctive logo and adverts, the innovative Mix-E-Load system he developed with Nick Pelling and commissioning Rob Hubbard to produce the memorable theme music to both games. He remains intensely proud of the groundwork he did which helped establish Thalamus as a premier C64 developer… and of introducing the youthful Finn to a quintessentially English custom.

"It was a shame Stav was from Finland, because they really have an obsession with drinking spirits. You can't drink till you're 21 over there and they're really expensive too. He just went mental for gin. I was sharing a flat in Ilford with Jon Hare, Gary Penn and Stav and there was sick everywhere."

Thankfully, Stavros sobered up enough to produce his third game for the label, Quedex, but Gary left during its development. 'Andrew [Wright] left at the same time. We both felt we were running the company and making good money for Newsfield, but not getting a slice.'

After a three-month stint at Electronic Arts, which at this stage was so small the company's founder, Trip Hawkins, personally interviewed him Gary moved into the unpredictable world of contract programming. His tale becomes one of the Good, the Bad and the Unfinished.

In category one is *Ricochet*, a decent *Breakout*-with-bells-on conversion



» *Delta* was a suberb shooter that brought love to C64 fans everywhere

TUNE

One of Gary's key contributions to early Thalamus releases was getting maestro Rob Hubbard on board. 'He was awesome to work with and we really clicked,' he states, proudly. 'Commissioning Thalamusik and then the *Delta* theme, which I thought was like Philip Glass mixed with Pink Floyd's 'On the Run' – Rob was awesome every fucking time.' Gary's enduring love of music has resulted in him setting up Internet radio show, Nuxaq. "It's pronounced Nut Sack, which is a terrible schoolboy joke I know. I wanted to create an environment where people can be creative – Jeff Minter and Gary Penn have done shows on it and I'm trying to get Matt Smith on…" To sample some truly diverse musical tastes and witty inter-tune banter, head to www.nuxaq.com where all previous shows can be downloaded.

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?



» *Ricochet's* baddies screen, complete with impressively accurate flat-top



» Gary's efforts helped get Minter's unique light synth Neon to a huge audience. Now please can you do the same for *Tempest 3000*?

OUR HOUSE

Throughout his career, Gary seems to have co-habited with the bulk of British 8-bit coders. It's a moot point as to whether this is because he's a very good flatmate or a very bad one, but his influence has spread beyond the games he was directly credited on. He contributed the character set to *Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Set* whilst living with Chris Yates, co-founder of Sensible Software and also suggested adding the evil black ink drops in *Wizball* – something that has led to many subsequently questioning his parentage. "Yeah, I've had some serious stick about that over the years," he acknowledges.
So Gary, are Brit coders like one big happy family?
"I think this country definitely has a breadth and depth of programming talent unequalled by any other. It really inspires me that people I knew twenty years ago are still around and doing awesome stuff. Jeff has managed to keep his vision and keep complete control and I've got a lot of time for Archer Maclean, particularly with *Mercury*. And yeah, I have given people jobs because of their Speccy credentials…"



» Gary and Doug Hare caught in a natural coding pose

"DOING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FOR LLAMASOFT IS A DREAM COME TRUE FOR ME – HELPING TO GET JEFF MINTER'S STUFF OUT TO A WIDER AUDIENCE."

GARY LIDDON

he produced for publishers Firebird. Development went well on what was to be his first published solo effort… until he became heavily involved with a particularly distracting girlfriend. Fortunately, he had not only included a level editor, he happened to be sharing a flat with Gary Penn and Nick Pelling again, this time in Hornchurch, and they thoughtfully helped get the project completed – though couldn't resist incorporating a cheat mode triggered by the legend, 'Garyluvsbigbots.'

Category two is filled by *Celebrity Squares*, a lacklustre scrolling shooter without even the joy of blasting Terry Wogan to redeem itself, which Gary succinctly describes as being, "f*cking terrible – barely worth the £50 we did it for."

So to category three – the unfinished *Tyger! Tyger!* Inspired by Capcom's *Black Tiger*, Gary had spent eight months on the title with Paul Docherty, while sharing a flat in Ruislip. "It was looking good," recalls Gary, "but then Firebird was sold off to Microprose and there wasn't much money riding on the contract, so it never got completed. Plus we were playing *Bubble Bobble* for f*cking ridiculously long periods. We'd play all 100 levels, just for the one second of gameplay to see who could shoot the big bubble at the end. And the loser had to sign a certificate stating they were officially gay. That may have had an impact…"

Perhaps running out of flats in London he could share with other programmers, Gary moved to Australia in 1989 to work for Beam Software, formerly Melbourne House, where he converted *Last Ninja 2* for the NES. It was a happy time but working in an office again didn't agree with the footloose Liddon and in 1990 he returned to the UK to work for Audiogenic on the C64 conversion of *Exterminator*. Contracts followed with Williams, where he got to hang out with Eugene Jarvis at a Strip Club ('He's an awesome character – a whirlwind of energy') and then with Climax, where he headed up the team that produced the PlayStation conversion of revered PC title *Diablo*.

"Being dropped into a room with eight programmers and trying to get things working was daunting, but I could see that big teams were the future. I had to learn to trust other people and they would end up doing a far better job than I could. Leading that team was an awesome experience."

Gary's project leading skills also saw him head up the hugely successful conversion of *Theme Park World* for consoles and soon he was managing projects across Climax's expanding empire as CEO. But Gary's heart remained with the creative process.

"It all just got too big for me and I left," he explains. "I've always loved games and being head of a company, as much as I enjoyed it there, wasn't what I wanted to be."

So, we have a man who has extensive programming and management experience, a burning desire to be involved in making inspirational videogames and loves music, herbal cigarettes and the word 'awesome.' Gary has surely now found his spiritual home…

"I'm doing business development for Llamasoft," grins a very contented Liddon. "It's a dream come true for me – helping to get Jeff Minter's stuff, someone with a genuine artistic vision, out to a wider audience."

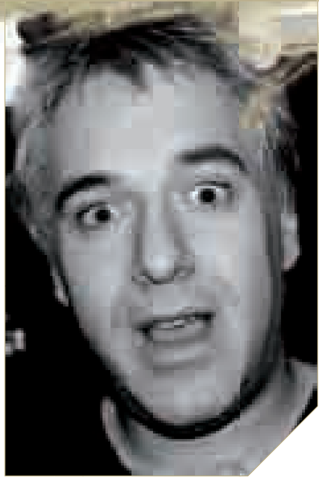
Gary's combination of passion, belief and useful contacts accrued over two decades in the games industry has already seen Jeff's light synth Neon incorporated into the firmware of every Xbox 360 and now work has begun on producing new Llamasoft games for Xbox Live Arcade.

The future looks awesome indeed.

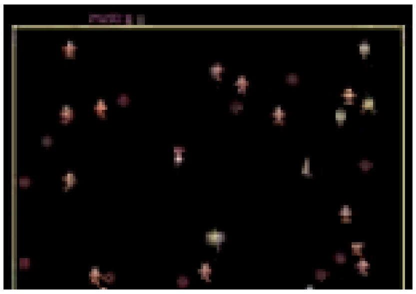




» **Left:** The unreleased Tyger! Tyger! is now playable thanks to the usual sterling work of Frank Gasking at Games That Weren't **Right:** Gary headed up numerous projects at Climax, including the ambitious Sudeki

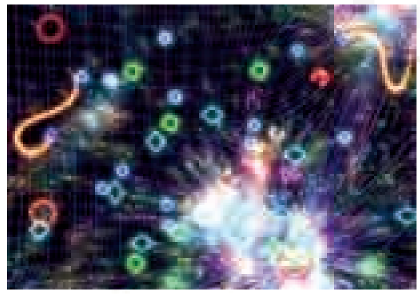


GARY LIDDON DESERT ISLAND DISKS



ROBOTRON ARCADE

1 "I've loved it so much and for so long. I've got a cabinet which I was lucky enough to get off a bloke who's wife was threatening to divorce him if he didn't get rid of it. The best balanced game ever made – it never feels unfair. And such fantastic sound. Absolutely perfect."



GEOMETRY WARS: RETRO EVOLVED XBOX 360

2 "I've gone berserk on this recently and it's all I'm playing on the 360. I love how beautiful it is – kind of like a light synth dressed up as a game and all the particle effects remind me of *Robotron*. The online element is great too – sending your mates taunting messages when you've beat their score."



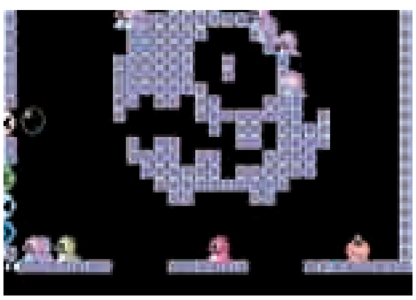
STARGATE ARCADE

3 "Another Williams one and another cab I've got, this time off Archer Maclean who'll sell anything to anyone. It's like *Defender* gone mental. Balanced, beautiful and not as well known as it should be. Phenomenal sound too."



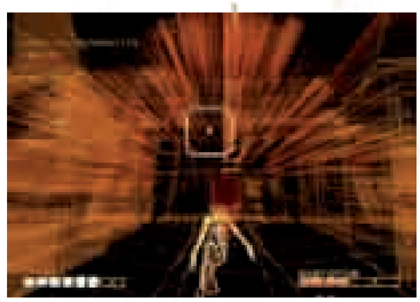
QUAKE PC

4 "I had an excellent year last year playing this to death with my mates. We set up a server in London and multiplayer *Quake* is just awesome. Fast, twitchy, incredibly hectic – kind of like a 3D *Robotron*."



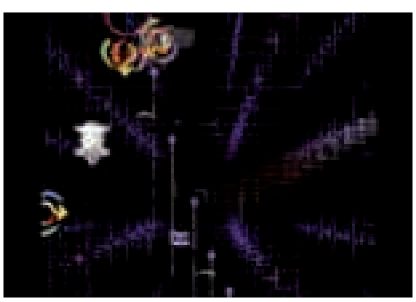
BUBBLE BOBBLE C64

5 "I remember when it came out, the graphics were so simple it felt like a step backwards, but that impressed me. It wasn't trying to put too much on the screen. It plays brilliantly – there's so much gaming content, secrets to find, things to do to make certain pick-ups appear… for the sheer amount of time I've spent playing it, it has to make the list."



REZ DREAMCAST

6 "I like games with a visual density and a prettiness and this I just adore. It reminds me of *Delta* in how the music is integrated and it just takes it to another level. That hook up with a game and its music doesn't happen enough. Level 5 in particular is so fantastic."



GRIDRUNNER ++ MAC

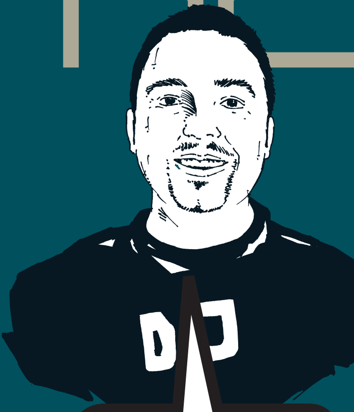
7 "I'm trying to do a game project a year and this was mine – the Mac version – for 2005. I love programming and this is great Jeff stuff. I did put a little simple thing in called Turbo Nutter Mode which plays at double speed, plus an online high score table."



LLAMATRON PC

8 "I realise I've basically chosen three *Robotron* type games but I just love this and playing games on certain substances is good… A few years ago a bunch of us from the YakYak forums looked after Jeff's house while he was on holiday. He's got a stand-up MAME cab with this on and we just caned it to bits. Christmas, at Jeff's house, playing *Llamatron* – just brilliant."

RETRORATED



If you're going on a long trip there's no better answer then to get stuck into a good old RPG. Nintendo's Game Boy Advance has a whole selection of mighty fine adventures to choose from that cover a wide range of different bases. From the arcadey style of *A Link to the Past*, to the more traditional *Eye of the Beholder*, the GBA has something for all.

RIVIERA: THE PROMISED LAND

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** ATLUS
» **DEVELOPER:** STING
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £ 18 +

The *Riviera* series first appeared on Bandai's Wonderswan, but due to it being entirely in Japanese few gamers would have actually experienced it. Luckily, this GBA version has been available in the US for some time now and is a great addition to your GBA library.

What makes *Riviera* so interesting is its melting pot of different genre styles. Movement is handled like a point and click adventure, battles are straight out of your typical SRPG, while there are even nods to the dating sim genre. Despite the seeming clash of styles, Sting pulls it off perfectly and the end result is a unique GBA experience. Add in generous amounts of speech, some electrifying visuals and a well scripted storyline that full of twists and turns and *Riveria* becomes a must buy.

OVERALL **88%**



» **A mishmash of playing styles makes playing through *Riviera* a unique experience**



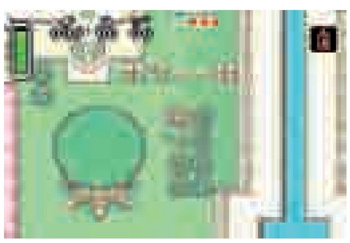
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE/CAPCOM
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £15 +

One of the SNES's greatest games not only gets lovingly ported to Nintendo's handheld; but also receives a brand new sub game courtesy of Capcom.
If you were never able to play this classic 16-bit adventure when it first appeared on the SNES, slap yourself around the face with a wet trout and head off to your nearest game emporium right now. Miyamoto's masterful RPG is wonderfully crafted, features some cunningly designed dungeons and is filled with stand out moments.
Then of course there's Capcom's fantastic *The Four Swords*; a precursor to its GameCube outing that enables you to link up with three other Links to solve a selection of cleverly designed dungeons that will both make and break friendships. Essential stuff!

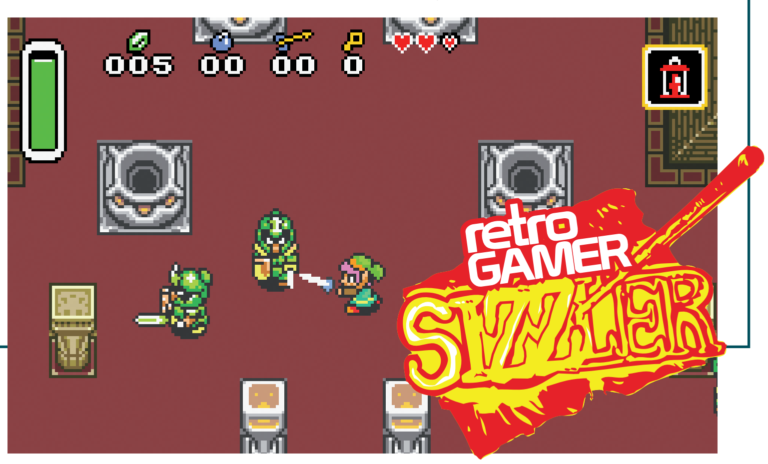
OVERALL **95%**



» Destroy the leaves to uncover many hidden secrets



» One of the greatest 16-bit journeys and it's just about to begin…



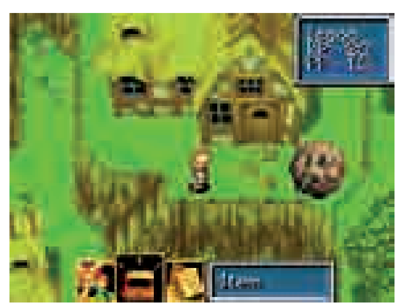
GOLDEN SUN/ GOLDEN SUN II

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
» **DEVELOPER:** CAMELOT
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £15+

The *Golden Sun* games are from the same development team that worked on the early *Shining Force* titles, and, as a result they share quite a few similarities. We've actually included both titles here, because it's really just one big adventure that's been spliced across two cartridges. While they're not as good as Camelot's earlier hits, both titles serve as a great introduction to the RPG market thanks to their relatively straightforward combat systems, enjoyable storylines and the many elemental familiars you're able to collect.
Both games are very involving however, and will take an absolute age to complete. Definitely for long journeys.

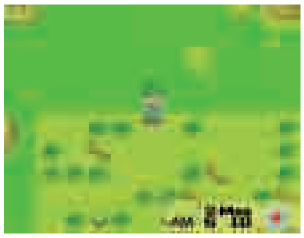
OVERALL **82%**



» *Golden Sun* looks delightfully old skool and is a great introduction to GBA RPGS



HARVEST MOON: FRIENDS OF MINERAL TOWN



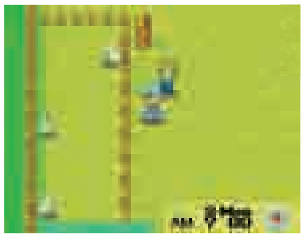
» It might not look like fun, but Natsume's farm sim is a great way to pass the time

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** UBISOFT
- » **DEVELOPER:** NATSUME
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £17 +

Like many of the other titles here, *Friends of Mineral Town* is an update of an earlier game, and interestingly, it's a PlayStation title. While the original PlayStation game utilised an isometric perspective, the GBA version uses the same old-fashioned 2D style that worked so well in the SNES game. Doing menial tasks like milking cows, planting seeds and mining ore might not sound exciting, but its amazing how quickly you get pulled into this absorbing little title. *Harvest Moon* is definitely not for everyone (after all, you have to actually work) but if you persevere you'll definitely be rewarded.

OVERALL **83%**



» Buy yourself some chickens and you can start selling their eggs for cash. Nice.



» Finding a girlfriend is just as essential as growing your crops.

MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA

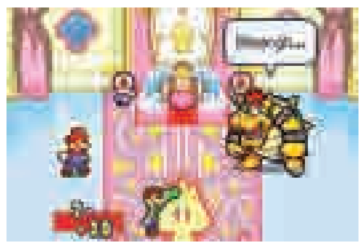
INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £15 +

Last issue we featured the excellent DS sequel *Back in Time*, so it only seems fair to include the original GBA adventure in our roundup.

Using a similar graphical style to the N64's *Paper Mario*, *Mario & Luigi* sees you controlling both brothers and using a string a hilarious team-up abilities to solve the game's many puzzles. The combat system is extremely intuitive and easy to pick up, while there's plenty of scope for stat building. Add in an amusing story and plenty of recognisable characters from the Mario universe and you have an outstanding RPG that shouldn't be missed under any circumstances.

OVERALL **89%**



» Bowser gets his just desserts from Mario yet again. Why does he even bother?



» No game is complete without its tutorial level…

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE MINISH CAP

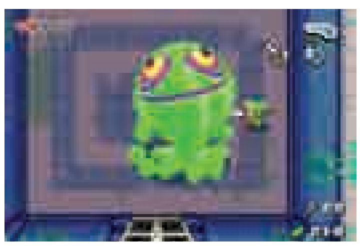
INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £18 +

While *The Minish Cap* doesn't follow the history that's been strictly adhered to by Link's many in-house adventures that doesn't make it any less charming. Indeed, many consider Link's second GBA outing - and no we're not including the NES ports – to be far greater than *A Link to the Past*, and whilst we wouldn't quite agree, it's definitely a close thing.

Capcom has created a great set of new items to delight and confound, the settings are truly wonderful and the ability to shrink yourself in order to complete certain sections of the game is a stroke of genius. If only the main adventure lasted a little longer…

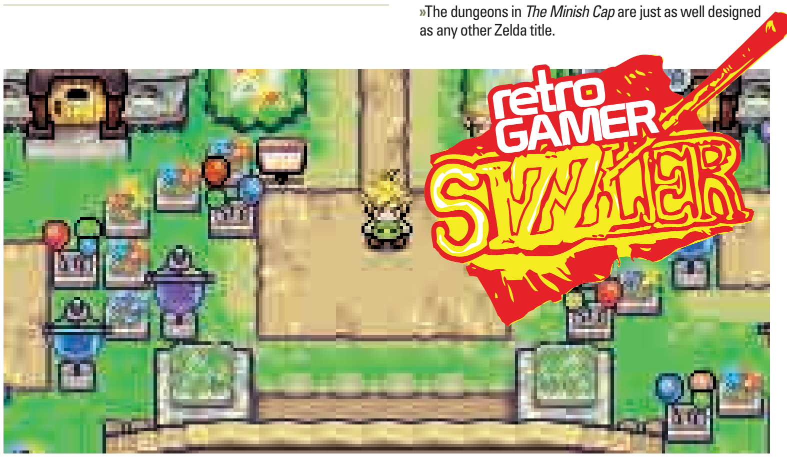
OVERALL **94%**



» Even the smallest enemy can cause you trouble when you've been shrunk!



»The dungeons in *The Minish Cap* are just as well designed as any other Zelda title.



POKÉMON EMERALD

INFORMATION

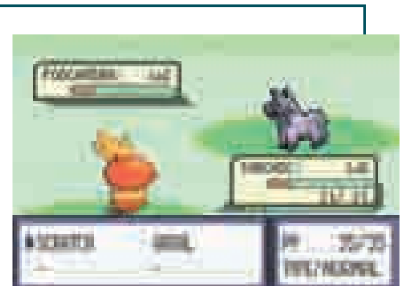
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** GAMEFREAK
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £20 +

You can't have a GBA RPG roundup without mentioning those lovable *Pokémon*, so true to form, here's Retro Gamer's offering.

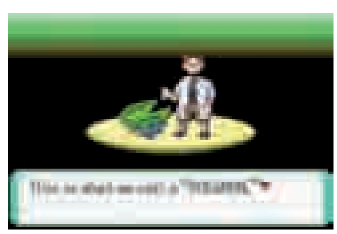
We've gone with *Pokémon Emerald*, mainly because it's the latest version, but to be fair, the other four available games *Sapphire* and *Ruby* are just as good. Whilst the games are refined updates, more than true sequels, they're tuned to perfection, feature an engaging battle system and will take an absolute age to complete; especially if you want to capture 'em all…

Don't be fooled by the game's cute factor, battling *Pokémon* is as good now as its ever been, so track a copy down sharpish.

OVERALL **86%**



» Torchic prepares to fight!





GAUNTLET: SEVEN SORROWS

ELF HAS SHOT THE FOOD…



- » **SYSTEM:** PLAYSTATION 2
- » **PRICE:** £39.99
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** MIDWAY
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1 - 4
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE FOR:** XBOX, PC



Remaking an old game can be tricky. You don't want to alienate fans of the original by giving it a drastic, unrecognisable overhaul, but on the over hand, you want it to appeal to the commercial crowd as much as possible. While Midway's latest incarnation of *Gauntlet* is hardly spectacular, it should be able to sate both camps.

We won't worry you about the plot, because it's about as important as an ashtray on a motorcycle. Suffice to say though that great doom has been wrought upon the world and it's down to a bunch of four heroes to put everything right again.

While you're still in control of *Gauntlet's* four stalwart heroes - a Warrior, Elf, Valkyrie and Wizard if you didn't know – they've picked up a fair few abilities since their 1985 outing. The most obvious are the feints and flips you can pull off by using the second analogue stick, and then there's the special moves that can be bought for gold pieces; then you have the different weapon combos that can be bought and the… well, you get the idea…

Forget about the dull, muddy visuals and generic level design, *Seven Sorrows'* main draw comes from its multiplayer aspect – especially if you're able to play it online. While the linear gameplay is still firmly in place, the ability to chat with mates and work as a team adds greatly to the overall experience. If only Midway had made the single player game a little less monotonous and a lot more exciting…



» There are some vicious bosses in *Seven Sorrows*, so be sure to take them out quickly



OPINION

While the new additions like special moves and combos give the game some much needed variety, I can't help but get bored with *Seven Sorrows*. Sure, it emulates the original game well enough and the online side of it is enjoyable, but it just feels rather lacking. Definitely one to rent rather than add to your collection.

Dan Curley



OPINION

I've been enjoying this immensely online and it's now replaced my nightly Xbox Live Arcade *Gauntlet* fix. Sure the visuals aren't the best, and the gameplay is rather limited, but if you can play it online (or with mates) it's just like being back in the arcades. Great stuff.

Damian Butt

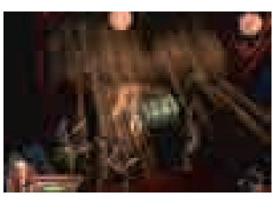
IN SUMMARY

While it's unlikely to impress many newcomers, fans of the original Gauntlet should be more than happy with this new update. Just be sure to rope in a couple of friends…

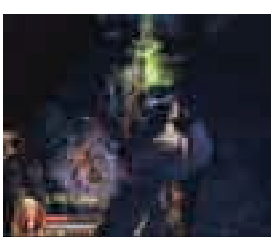
RATING **63%**



» It's like taking part in a stop-motion film…



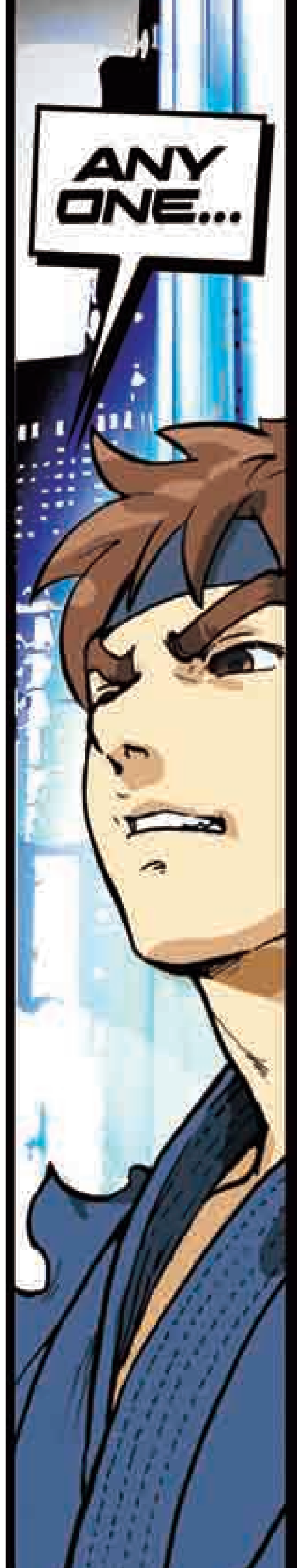
» Treasure chests can contain valuable gold, precious food or Death itself. Be careful when opening…



» No game of *Gauntlet* would be complete without its monster spawning generators; it's a shame then that some monsters respawn from thin air!

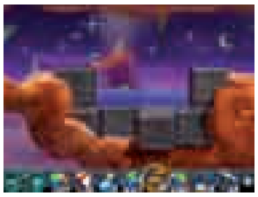


» The dull, uninspired visuals mask some genuinely enjoyable combat



LEMMINGS

LET'S GO!



- » **SYSTEM:** PSP
- » **PRICE:** £34.99
- » **RELEASED:** 10 FEBRUARY
- » **PUBLISHER:** SONY
- » **DEVELOPER:** TEAM 17
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **Below left:** Aww, look at the little Lemmings digging through solid rock. **Below right:** Falling from a great height will kill your little lemmings. Best to equip them with a handy umbrella

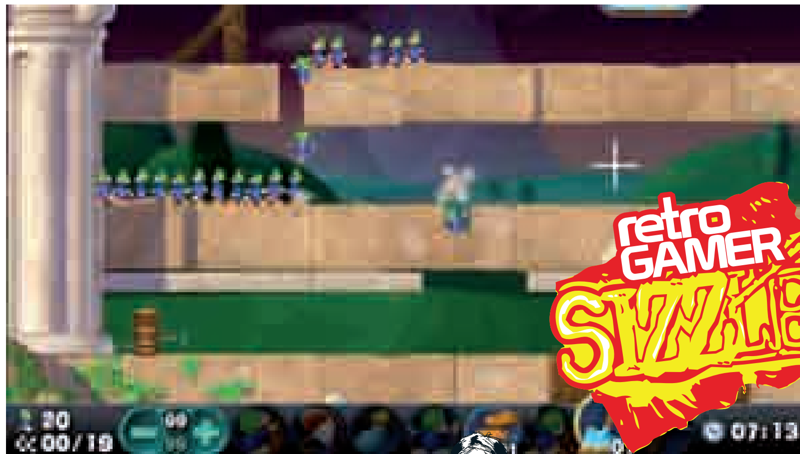


It's safe to say that everyone's favourite green-haired mop-topped rodents have had something of a rough deal since settling under the unscrupulous gaze of SCEE.

Taking the furry vermin into the third dimension wasn't exactly the greatest of moves, and apart from the odd mobile project here and there, the franchise was effectively dead.

Fortunately, Sony has decided that its sleek PSP is the perfect machine to revitalise the franchise, and it's handed the reigns of its beloved series to those talented chaps at Team 17. The end result is a delightful puzzler that easily eclipses many of the games in the current PSP library – not bad for a concept that's now heading into its 15th year.

For those unaware, your task is to simply guide a set number of suicidal rodents to each level's exit. Nothing's ever easy though, as a selection of dangerous traps and obstacles stand between the Lemmings and their gateway to nirvana. Luckily, Lemmings can be assigned various skills that can be utilised in order for them to reach their goal. Careful though, as the skills themselves are available in limited quantities, so clever planning is needed to finish each stage.



Those fearing the lack of mouse input have nothing to worry about. Team 17 have done an amazing job at porting the game across to its new home, and you'll find your squad of loveable rodents amazingly easy to control. Skills are selected with the shoulder buttons, while the d-pad moves the onscreen cursor. It's extremely simple to use and soon becomes second nature, therefore allowing you to concentrate on completing the many fiendishly designed levels.

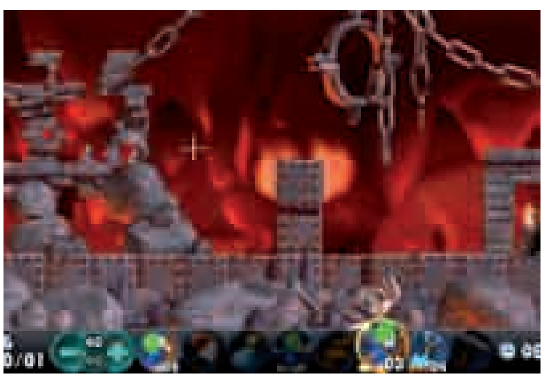
Should you get bored battling through the new levels that Team 17 has created (highly unlikely, as they're meticulously designed) you can simply return to the original stages, which have been given a fantastic graphical overhaul that still manages to posses all the charm that was evident in the first Amiga game. *Lemmings* may not be your typical PSP title, but that only helps to make it even more appealing.

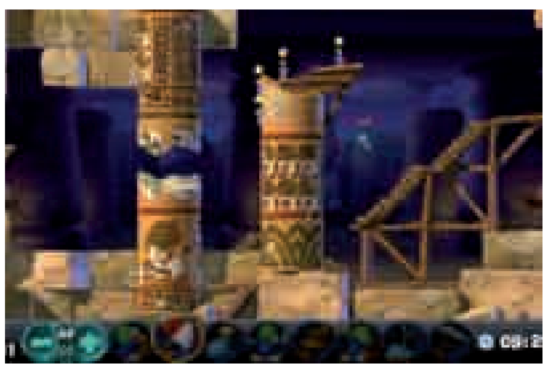


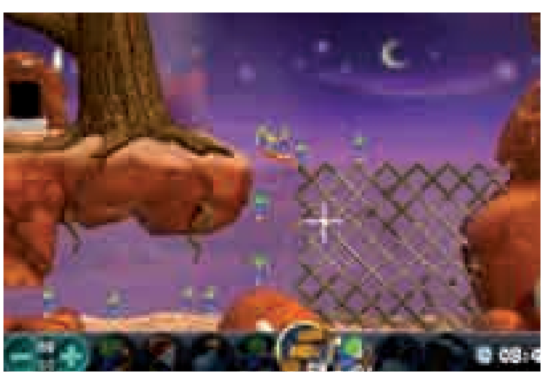
OPINION

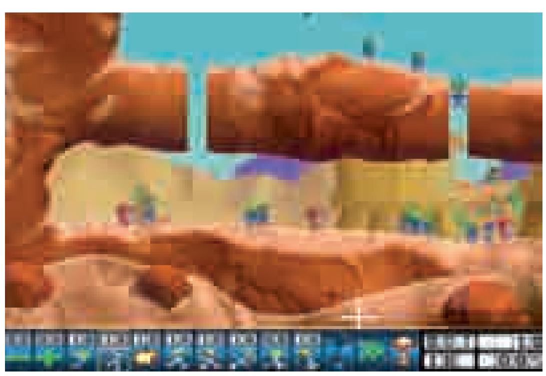
In a sea of dazzling 3D visuals that is the PSP's software library, I expected *Lemmings* to follow suit. While polygons do appear in each level's backgrounds the main visuals are good old 2D and look delightful. Team 17 has taken the franchise back to its roots and delivered a stunning puzzler that will delight as much as its later levels infuriate. Essential

Damian Butt









» Laying bridges, tunnelling through metal, is there anything those loveable critters can't do?

» These Lemmings are so cute, it's almost a shame to kill them. Almost…

IN SUMMARY

Team 17 has really spoiled us. Cute 2D graphics, fantastic animation, superb level design, the ability to create your own stages – *Lemmings* on the PSP leaves no stone unturned. It's even possible to take part in Wi-Fi games, and play the original Amiga levels. An essential purchase.

RATING **90%**



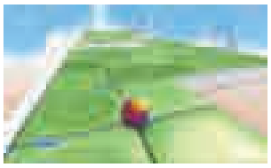
OPINION

Let's go! Fans of *Lemmings* will be delighted with this remarkable effort from Team 17. Wisely sticking to what made the original *Lemmings* so great to play, this PSP version is stunning and deserves to be in every PSP owner's collection. Easily one of the best puzzlers to hit Sony's handheld.

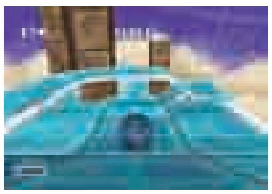
Darran Jones

MARBLE BLAST ULTRA

"KEEP ROLLING, ROLLING"



- » **SYSTEM:** X360
- » **PRICE:** 600 POINTS
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** MICROSOFT
- » **DEVELOPER:** GARAGE GAMES INC
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-8



» Collecting gems becomes much more fun when you throw other players into the mix



The Xbox Live Arcade service just keeps throwing up gems, but this little beauty from Garage Games Inc. may well be the pick of the bunch. It's essentially a mix of *Monkey Ball* and *Marble Madness* with a smattering of *Spindizzy*; you control a marble with the analogue stick and try to get to the goal at the end of the level, or collect a set number of gems along the way. It's a beautifully simple idea, but the level of design is so fiendish that you'll be hooked for days.

Beating the advanced single player levels takes serious skill, but it's the multiplayer mode that will keep you coming back for more. Eight players, one map, and a mad rush for gems mixed with much



» Fans of *Marble Madness* and *Spindizzy* will be instantly at home

profanity over the mic and some seriously amusing power-ups. *Marble Blast Ultra* is magnificent fun, and super smooth over Live – it could well be the best 600 points you'll ever get to spend. Another excellent title to go online with.

IN SUMMARY

A superb addition to Xbox Live Arcade, and easily worth the meagre amount of money it costs to download.

RATING **91%**



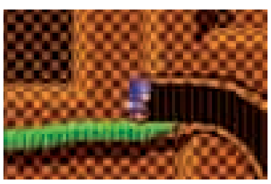
OPINION

This is the most fun I've had on my 360 yet. For around a fiver, you get a fascinating array of puzzles, and a multiplayer experience that will simply blow your mind. An utterly essential purchase.

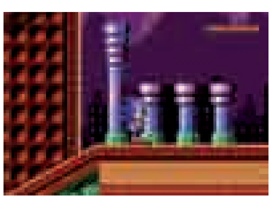
Dan Curley

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG PART ONE

GREAT GAME, POOR IDEA



- » **SYSTEM:** MOBILE PHONE
- » **PRICE:** £5
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** IFONE
- » **DEVELOPER:** IFONE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1



» If you can complete this stage without loosing a life, you're a better gamer than we are



It's a sad day when a gamers' thumb dexterity lets them down, but mobile phone games seem to only exist to savour the wails of suffering players. Even the simplest classics tend to annoy rather than please and sadly, *Sonic The Hedgehog* is next in line.

At a glance it all looks to be going well. The first three levels of the Mega Drive game are here in all their glory and, as long as you're standing still, there are few problems. Of course, *Sonic* isn't about standing still. At speed the game shows its many cracks and poor scrolling combined with the mobile phones hilariously broken control abilities render all but the simplest areas near impossible and – more importantly – unfun.

The further you progress and the more precision jumping you have to do/endure, the more irritating things become. It's really unfortunate, but phones are actually made for talking, not for speeding blue hedgehogs.



» It looks identical to the Mega Drive game, so why doesn't it play like it?

IN SUMMARY

Whilst certain games lend themselves quite well to the mobile format, *Sonic* sadly isn't one of them. A shame as we were really looking forward to it…

RATING **43%**



OPINION

It looks like *Sonic*, (sort of) sounds like *Sonic*, but it sure as hell doesn't play like *Sonic the Hedgehog*. Sadly, *Sonic's* requirement for the play to instantly react to danger just doesn't work on a mobile phone's clunky interface. One to avoid.

Damian Butt



GP2X

IT'S STILL IN ITS INFANCY, BUT THE GP2X IS ALREADY BEGINNING TO IMPRESS. SHANE R MONROE TAKES A LOOK AT THE LATEST VERSION AND GIVES HIS

- **PRICE:** £124.99
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PUBLISHER:** GAMEPARK HOLDINGS
- **DEVELOPER:**

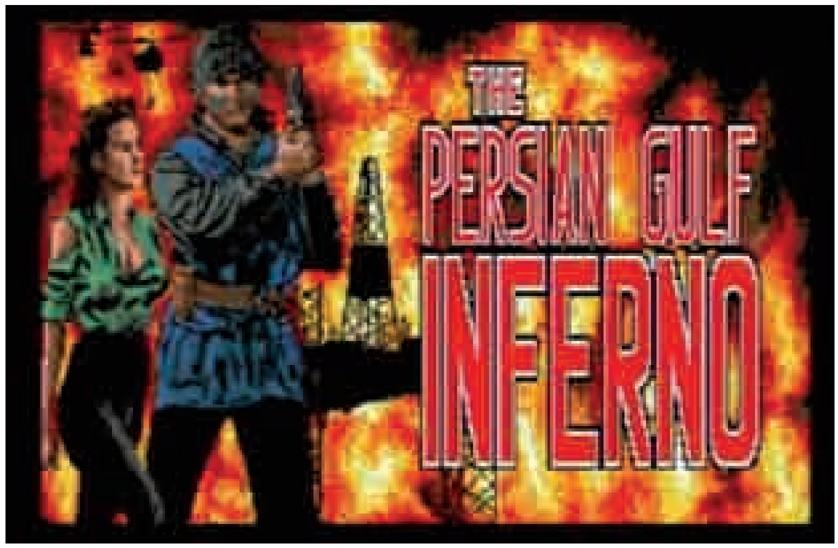


Portable convergence is a popular market these days. Everyone wants music, video, and gaming on the go. While some formidable products are available, retro gamers are more or less left out in the cold. GamePark Holdings has introduced a new handheld entertainment device dubbed the GP2X that promises to fill that void.

From a hardware perspective, the GP2X has plenty of potential. It sports two 200mhz ARM processors with 64MB onboard RAM, and the 320x240 3.5 LCD TFT screen is bright and colourful and better looking than the Nintendo DS, although not quite as sexy as the PSP.

There's a digital thumb stick, four buttons, two shoulder buttons, and of course the obligatory Start and Select. Built-in stereo speakers, headphone jack, USB adapter and TV-Out port round out the unit. For storage, nothing proprietary and standard SD memory cards are used.

No matter how good the hardware is, historically speaking, software is king. With any portable device like this, we need to look at what's built-in, and what third party stuff is available. Based on the Linux operating system, software for the GP2x is remarkably plentiful.



» Relive past classics with the GP2X

Built into the unit we have your basic media players: video, audio, and photos.

Video playback is basic, but functional. Compatible with most Internet-friendly codecs like Divx, XVid and MPG4, the only thing strangely missing is the ability to playback MPG video and even MPG1. You can seek through videos easily, but there is no bookmarking feature. Videos will play sequentially in a folder, however there is no play list or shuffle support. TV Out support promises 720x480 on your television, with the cable being sold separately.

We're all hoping for the iPod Killer, but this isn't quite it. A basic audio player is provided that will play MP3 (I tried 24kbps to 192kbps), OGG and unprotected WMA files. The interface allows for easy song seeking, stereo/mono playback, shuffle, repeat and basic preset equalizer settings. It's quite usable, but there's no play list support, or the ability to play protected music from online music services. Worth noting, a community project called *OldPlay* is picking up the slack and offers an alternative music player that is more robust including play list support. However, neither provides bookmarking, so if you listen to audio books or offline radio shows you are out of luck.

The best of the trio of built-in apps is the photo viewer. Packed to the brim with features, you can zoom, rotate and scale, as well as fit to screen and pan around larger images with ease. This is the toy you want to bring to the next family reunion to show off pictures, and thanks to the TV Out, you can use Grandma's TV, so the whole clan doesn't have to crowd around you.

If the built-in apps selection sounds a bit weak to you, fear not – this machine's power is in the fact that it's open for development. That's right, anyone can develop for this machine – and being based on Linux means that there is a ton of software out there waiting to be picked up and ported over. The community is already hard at work, and we have the highlights for you.

Many companies have released the source code to their older games like *Duke Nukem 3D*,



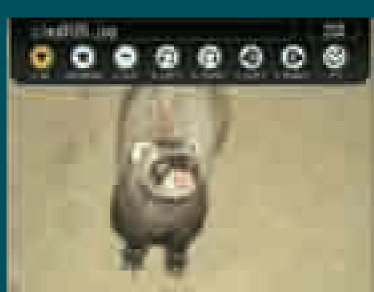
» So many lovely options to choose from, which will you choose?

THREE INCHES ISN'T ENOUGH?

The latest craze is TV Out compatibility in portable devices. Sure, these devices are made to be 'on the go', but what about when you're at home? What if you want to share that episode of *Desperate Housewives* on your SD card with friends? TV Out is where it's at.

The GP2X has some basic TV Out support already; the internal apps like the video player and photo viewer already support it. However, support from third party applications is definitely in its infancy. In order to support TV Out, it requires the programmers to do some coding magic and not everyone is up to speed yet.

I don't know about you guys, but the concept of my GP2x playing old Commodore 64 or Atari 2600 games on my 36 inch Wega TV gives me the chills; and all this on 2 AA batteries. New technology rocks!





» It's no PSP, but the playback on the GP2X is still very good

Quake, *Doom* and many others. These games and more have already been ported over to the GP2X, and have done quite well. Through the power of 'interpreters' (software that runs other software) we also have access to things like SCUMMVM, which allows us to play old LucasArts adventure titles like *The Secret of Monkey Island* and the *Ultima* series. There's even an attempt to get old PC DOS games running on the GP2X.

Of course, there are always newer and better applications being built by the community. Early versions of PDF and Flash viewers have already surfaced, along with tools to help you adjust your LCD and CPU timing. As mentioned, *OldPlay* is offering up better music playback including support for classic music formats like .SID and .MOD files. For you skinning and interface freaks out there, the GP2X is fully skinnable and the artistic community has answered the call with 80+ skins already available – and you can always make your own!

The jewel in the GP2X crown, though, is emulation. Right now, emulators exist for the Mega Drive, NES, SNES, Commodore 64/Vic-20, Atari ST, Amiga, Atari 2600, ColecoVision, Spectrum and many others. Some are nearly perfect, too. Along with consoles and computers, the venerable MAME has also been ported, bringing us hundreds of classic arcade games like *Pac-Man* and *Space Invaders*. Every day brings something new to emulation on the GP2X; hell, even PlayStation emulation is currently being worked on!

While impressive, there are some issues. Aside from standard early adopter firmware type issues, the most complained about by the community is the thumb stick; it tends to be a little sensitive to diagonals, often making the stick a challenge for gaming. GPH is aware of the issue and are working on finding a solution. Meanwhile, the community is also coming up with ways to combat the issue. Remember, this is the 'first edition' and hardware often goes through changes before the 'final product' actually ships.

As the GP2x and its community continue to grow, we'll bring you more coverage of this exciting new device.



» Retro love on the move. Perfect…



SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV

MODE 7 HEAVEN



- » **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SNES
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £8+



HISTORY

My first encounter with Konami's fourth *Castlevania* title wasn't what I was expecting. There was no denying that the first few levels had some suitably atmospheric music; but I was unimpressed with its actual look. "Why did Simon Belmont look like he was ice-skating across the floor? Why was the animation so poor and the visuals so garish, and how on earth had it managed to score so highly?" were just a few of the questions I asked myself, but being a huge fan of the series, I decided to trust in IGA and his latest creation.

Slowly, but ever so surely, Konami's magnificent platformer began to reveal itself to be a title that was full of magical moments. With the first few levels under my belt, the overall look of the game began to pick up, and Konami, slowly, but ever so seductively gave me a real taster of what Nintendo's new console was capable of.

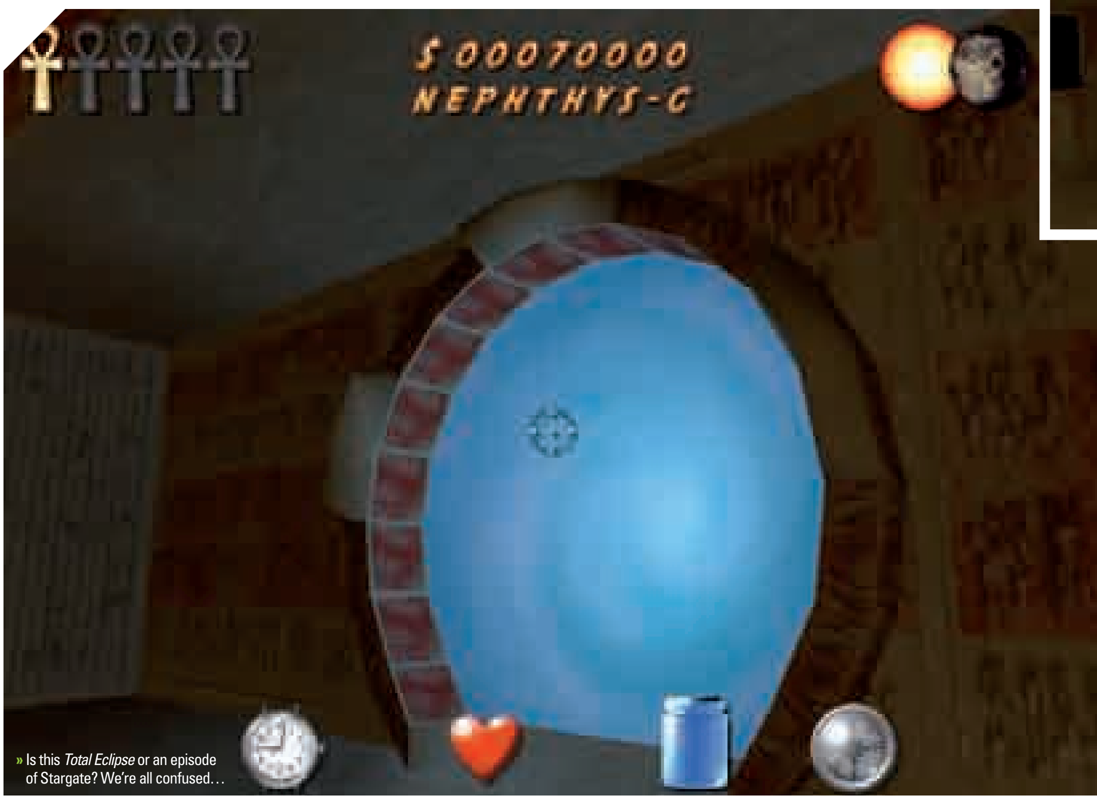
Indeed, the turning point comes when you find yourself in a room with no apparent exit and only a gothic figurine to swing from. Latching onto the metallic bat, the entire room began to slowly rotate, masterfully showing off the SNES's impressive Mode 7 chip. After that, the game really kicked into gear and delivered plenty of eye-popping effects that still manage to impress today. Remember the spinning tunnel that slowly rotated backwards and forwards? I certainly do, as it blew me away the first time I saw it. Sure there was the odd bit of slowdown, but by god, it looked – and still looks – utterly amazing. Still, even that moment couldn't compete with the frenzied dash across some gigantic Mode 7 chandeliers as they precariously swung backwards and forwards. The majestic thunderous music, the ominous creaking from the actual chandeliers you were crossing and the final moment of relief when you made it safely across still remains one of my favourite moments from Konami's illustrious franchise. Quite why *Super Castlevania IV* never made it to the GBA I'll never know…


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RETRO SCENE

THIS MONTH WE TAKE AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE BRAND NEW REMAKE OF THE WONDERFUL TOTAL ECLIPSE...

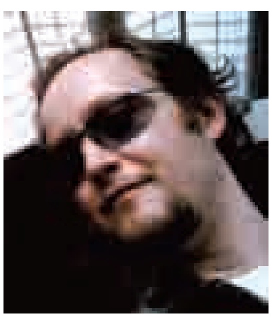


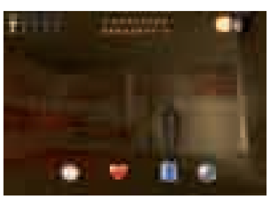


» Is this *Total Eclipse* or an episode of Stargate? We're all confused…

TREVOR STORY CHATS TO RETRO GAMER ABOUT HIS LATEST PROJECT

FULLY ECLIPSED





» Storey's remake is dripping with atmosphere, mainly because of the fantastic new lighting effects that have been added

To tie in with this month's excellent Freescape feature, we managed to track down Trevor Storey, a 35-year old graphic artist who likes nothing more than making dazzling remakes of old classics and is currently putting the finishing touches to his *Total Eclipse* remake.

Retro Gamer: So how long how you been remaking games for then Trevor?

Trevor Storey: Well, it all started around 1999. Like lots of 8-bit fans, I had always loved platformers and not being a programmer, had never had a chance to create my own game. Fortunately, someone tipped me off to a wonderful game creation tool called '*The Games Factory*' and I soon created a truly naff version of *Trolley Wally*. Since starting work in the games industry I really missed doing 2D graphics, so I naturally jumped at the chance to return to something that I loved doing.

RG: Why choose to remake *Wizball* and *Total Eclipse*?

TS: For me, *Wizball* remains the greatest/most original game ever released, so when I had the chance to work with Graham Goring - famous remake figure on the likes of Retrospec and Retro Remakes – I realized that it was a title I just had to be a part of.

Freescape was an actual graphics engine that was way ahead of its time but unfortunately, the machines it was available on at the time weren't really up to the actual challenge. A remake of *Total Eclipse* seemed like a sound choice and as Ovine (fellow collaborator) had been working on a remake of *Cholo* the engine was already in place.

RG: The graphics in *Total Eclipse* are already looking very impressive. How long have you been working on it for now?

TS: To be honest, the rooms in *Total Eclipse* didn't take me that long to put together. I'd say it was a grand total of about three weeks. There are only around 50 rooms in the original game so I was spending most of my time adding lighting effects and making everything look spankingly good.

RG: Are you adding any new gameplay mechanics to the games or will they both be direct ports?

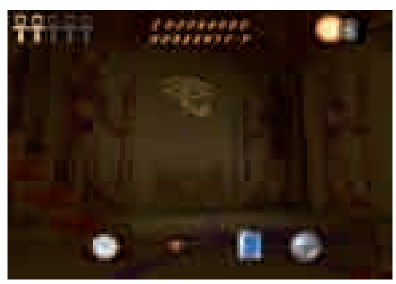
TS: Thankfully having a mouse will make *Total Eclipse* much easier to play (especially if you've only ever experienced the 8-bit versions). Our version of *Total Eclipse* is a lot easier to use and we have added a few additions, but I'll leave you to find out what they are. While the original game roughly took an hour to complete, this was mainly due to the slow speed that it ran at! We've added the aforementioned bits to ensure the game takes a little longer to complete, but on the whole it's pretty similar to the original game.

RG: So when will both games be finished?

TS: *Total Eclipse* is painfully close, all the rooms are in and Stu (Ovine) is well into the puzzles so I reckon it won't be long at all. *Wizball* will be at least a few months yet though. Now that Graham Goring has recently finished work on his corking *Exolon DX* remake (check it out at http://retrospec.sgn.net/game-overview.php?link=exolon he's now free to get stuck in on *Wizball*.

RG: So what else can we look forward to?

TS: How does a remake of *Megatree* sound? Three of us have been working on it since last year and we really need to pull our fingers out and get it finished. We've nearly finished the first level and the front end was completed but there's still a lot that needs doing.



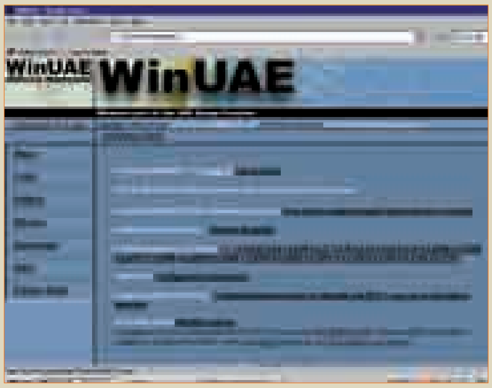
» If this is what *Total Eclipse* can look like, imagine how good a *Castle Master* remake would be…

EMULATE THIS

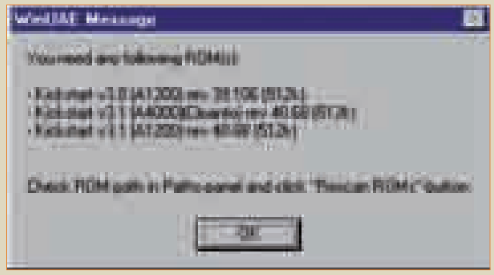
EVERY MONTH RETRO GAMER WILL BE GIVING YOU A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF EMULATION. TO TIE IN WITH OUR FEATURED MACHINE, THIS MONTH IT'S THE SUPERB AMIGA 1200

WINUAE

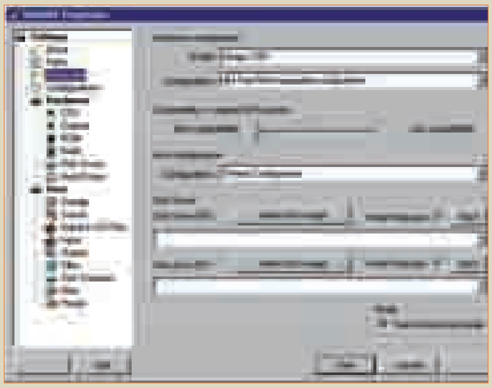
Want the ultimate Amiga emulator for your PC? Well you need to download a copy of the rather excellent WinUAE then. Here's a quick starters guide to get you up and running.



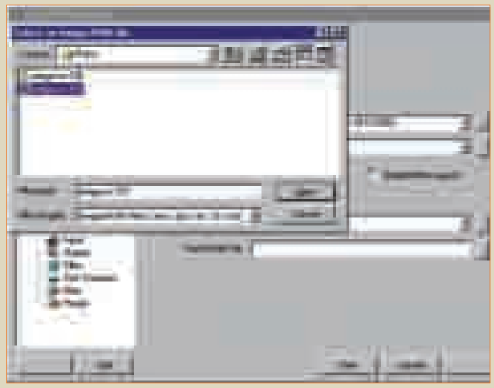
STEP 1 So, you want to emulate your favourite 16-bit then? Head over to www.winuae.net, click through to the download pages and grab yourself WinUAE installers. Once downloaded, run the program and it will install WinUAE on your system. Unless you've specify otherwise during the installation process, a short cut will have been created on your desktop which will take you directly to the emulator once it's double-clicked on. It's called WinUAE and is represented by the familiar Amiga 'Tick' logo.



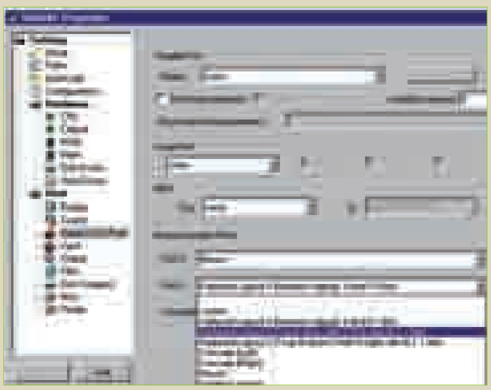
STEP 2 Once double-clicked, it's likely you'll get a message like the one of the left here; this is because you need to buy the Kickstart ROM images for the emulator to actually work. For this purpose, go to www.amigaforever.com/online where you can buy the relevant files. Buy it, download it and you're ready to go.



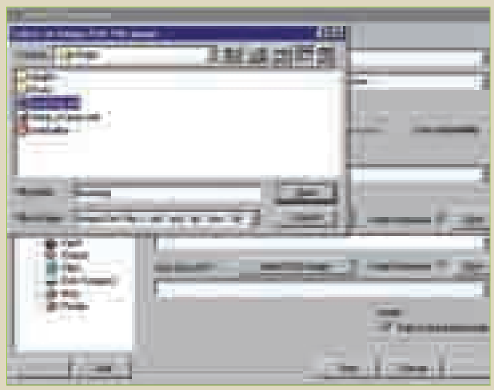
STEP 3 On starting, you'll be greeted by this screen. This is for quick-starting your games, demos, applications and utilities. But you need to tell the emulator where to look for your Kickstart ROM first. Click on ROM on the left-hand side (under Chipset) and there will be a heading that says 'ROM settings'. On the far right of 'Boot ROM File' is a button that is simply three full stops. Click on that and a dialogue box will open.



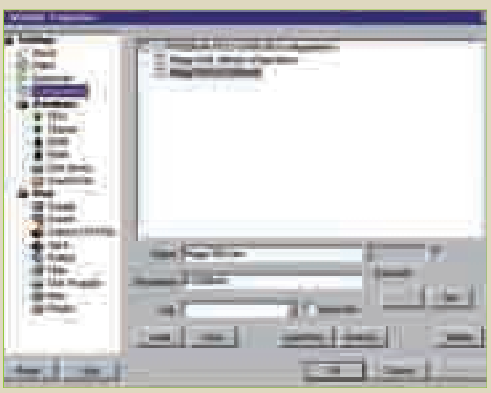
STEP 4 Now navigate to where your Amiga Kickstart ROM files are on your system and double-click on the appropriate file according to your needs. Now you're going to want to set up your system. Once you have opened the relevant ROM file, click on the Display tab on the left-hand side. The best way to run WinUAE at full speed is to select full-screen mode by clicking Full Screen under the Settings header. If you do this, don't forget to click Horizontal and Vertical centring under the Centering heading on the right-hand side of the dialogue box.



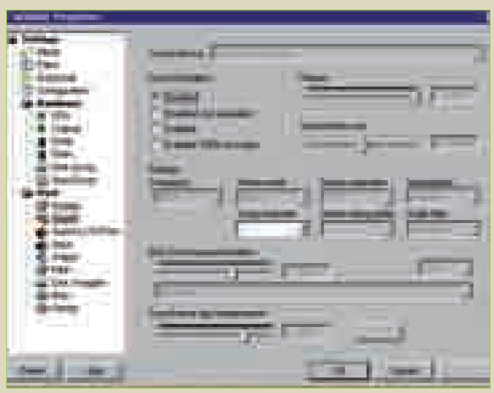
STEP 5 I bet you're itching to get started, aren't you? Don't worry; you're just a few more clicks away. The next thing to do is to select the control methods under the Game & I/O Ports menu. The Amiga mouse is emulated by your Windows mouse. Control port 1 is the port most regularly used for games, so configure it to your most comfortable setting. You're almost ready to load your first Amiga game.



STEP 6 Now you've configured your game port, it's time to load your first virtual disk. For single-disk games, click the Quickstart tab on the left-hand side of the emulator. Under the heading Disk Drives, it will say 'Disk Drive DF0:' this is the Amiga equivalent of the A drive on your PC. Click 'Select Disk Image' and navigate to the place that you have downloaded your games. Once you've selected the one that you want, click Open and then click the Start button at the bottom of your dialogue box. The screen should go blank and in a short time your game should be loaded.



STEP 7 Pressing F12 at any time while the emulator is running will bring up the WinUAE Properties dialogue box. This will allow you to alter any of your settings at any point, load a new game or reset the emulator. Once you are happy with all of your settings, click Configurations on the left-hand side and save it. This will prevent you from setting up your emulator every time you start it, and will mean you can start playing those classic Amiga titles much more quickly than before. Very handy!



STEP 8 If your PC seems to be struggling to run the games at a reasonable speed, press F12 and click on the Sound button on the left-hand side. This will bring up the sound menu, where you can disable it, or emulate it but without 100% accuracy. It might also be worth trying switching the stereo off if you want to hear the original music while you are playing. Full documentation is provided with the emulator, or you might want to register over at www.lemonamiga.com or our own Retro Gamer forums and ask for further help there.

RETRO SCENE

EVERY MONTH RETRO GAMER WILL REVEAL A CLASSIC HOME-BREW TITLE THAT MAY HAVE PASSED YOU BY, THIS MONTH IT'S A REMAKE OF HUNGRY HORACE

Remake of the Mouth

HUNGRY HORACE MUST FEEL BALLOTED BY NOW

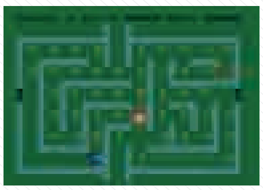
HUNGRY HORACE PC

***Hungry Horace* was released way back in 1982, and was part of a series of games starring the odd-looking blue creature.** It's probably best described as a *Pac-Man* alike game in that Horace must navigate screen after screen and eat as much as possible. A bell rings somewhere within each level which, if collected, will allow you to eat the roaming nasties too. These creatures are out to stop Horace and multiply as you progress. This game must have simply looked superb way back in the day, and as sure as eggs are eggs, it looks terrible today, as does this remake.

That's not the point though – the looks and awful sounds in *Hungry Horace PC* hide a good, simple game. Quick reactions are needed to avoid the roamers, as the screens leave little room for manoeuvring, and as soon as you've satisfied your hunger from one level, it's on to the next, with a new screen layout requiring new tactics and faster reactions. In a world that's going mad for the Xbox 360, it feels fresh and playable.

This particular Horace game may have been overlooked slightly, but one can't deny it's simple, frantic fun. You will find yourself eating your way through screen after screen, hungry for more, and for Spectrum fans in particular, the feelings of nostalgia could be overwhelming. However, the remake suffers from long-term appeal as the game-play is sometimes just too simple, and it's back to your 360 once again now you've relived your childhood for an hour or so. Just remember though, not everything gets better with age.

RATING **67%**



» With all of that eating, it's not wonder that Horace's eyes are bigger than his belly





- » **FORMAT:** MS-DOS OR BETTER
- » **RELEASE DATE:** 2001
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** REBEL STAR
- » **LINK:** WWW.REBELSTAR.CO.UK/HHORACE.HTM
- » **REVIEWED BY:** SHAUN BEBBINGTON

TWO-MINUTE PROFILE

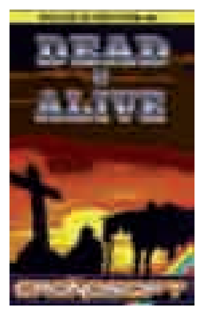
SIMON ULLYATT

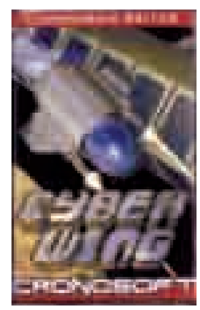
BACK IN 2002, SIMON ULLYATT DECIDED TO BRING BACK REAL-MEDIA RELEASES TO THE 8-BIT MASSES. IT STARTED SLOWLY, BUT UNDER HIS HOME-BREW BUDGET LABEL CRONOSOFT, ULLYATT HAS BUILT UP A STRONG PORTFOLIO OF GAMES. WE SENT OUR NEWS HOUND TO FIND OUT MORE...

Ullyatt has a long history of supporting often over-looked computers, and after being editor of the Oric fanzine Rhetoric, he was looking for pastures new, which turned out to be releasing new software on old computers. As he recalls, "It was around 2002 when I started Cronosoft. I'd just finished editing the now defunct ORIC/Atmos magazine 'Rhetoric', and found myself at a loose end. I'd always liked the idea of running a software label, and even more so, one that could release games for systems that the marketplace would normally overlook."

It was quite a humble beginning and a big undertaking. Cassette media had been in decline, and many had turned their hands to emulation and remakes to get their retro-fix. However, the response to Cronosoft started off positively, "There are some people who were really quite enthusiastic, and others I guess didn't see the point. Luckily, there was enough people to make it worthwhile, that thought as I did, that there is added value to a game that can be physically bought and kept as part of a collection as opposed to something that is simply downloaded for free." Being able to offer small royalties to the people who submitted their works soon built up a strong portfolio of games, coming to ahead in 2005 with Cronosoft's best known and fastest selling production Platform Game Designer for the ZX Spectrum. Ullyatt says that Spectrum and Commodore 64 sales have been and remain strong, however, he recognises that this will probably always be a niche market within a niche market, "I'd love to say I could sell games in their thousands, but I really don't think it will happen. It really is a niche market, and will only ever appeal to like-minded enthusiasts, and never the mainstream. However, if a real blockbuster of a game (for example, a fabled game from the past, or a game by a hugely renowned author) were to appear, then I'd say that it would be a distinct possibility of it doing well." So, the future is looking up for Cronosoft. More new games are on their way, but most importantly it's quality that counts, and quality is what Cronosoft has in spades.







» Just some of the games available from Cronosoft.

HOME-BREW RATED

Home-Brew, love it or loathe it, you can't deny that it's becoming an important part of the retro scene. This month we take a look at two great Amiga titles, *Metal Warrior* and *Mr Beanbag*

LET'S GET THE ROCK OUTTA HERE...!

METAL WARRIOR

- » **FORMAT:** AAMIGA A500 (512K OR BETTER)
- » **RELEASE DATE:** 2004
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** COVERT BIT OPS
- » **PUBLISHER:** SELF-PUBLISHED
- » **PRICE:** FREE (DOWNLOAD)
- » **REVIEWED BY:** SHAUN BEBBINGTON



The Amiga version of *Metal Warrior* is something of a distant cousin to the popular Commodore 64 series – in fact, the C64 version is based on this game, but it was finished and released first. Anyhow, *Metal Warrior* is set in a near future world where greedy pop record label executives are trying their best to destroy creativity in music by assassinating rock and metal artists and bands.

The popular group Metal Army find themselves on the verge of a major international record deal. Whilst on tour, the evil pop overlords try to ram their tour-bus off the road – sadly only two band members survived the ordeal. Playing Ian, the former vocalist from the band, you take it upon yourself to investigate the incident and uncover the evil conspiracy against rock and metal music, thus saving the world from bleak commercialised and uncreative musical forms once and for all… if only!

The task in hand is to take out the evil assassins within Sub City, accumulate points and uncover the conspiracy. On the way, you pick up hints and information from the few friendly faces within the game. You must also practice playing the guitar which will eventually help you in learning many of the songs on your to do list. Other than that, watch your back as anything could be around any corner.

The game is a 2D run 'n' gun affair. There's a lot of exploring to do, as well as arming your binary self to the teeth. You can carry up to seven items that you must swap between to utilise, and hints lead you to the next task. The game is fairly well done, with some of the code dating back a decade, though it's not shockingly original nor are the graphics immense. There's a nice game here, but we prefer it's distant C64 relatives.

RATING **72%**

» Take on the evil world of Pop music with *Metal Warrior*… ROCK ON!





» Cute platform action returns to the Amiga A1200 with *Mr Beanbag*

BEANBAG TO THE RESCUE

MR BEANBAG

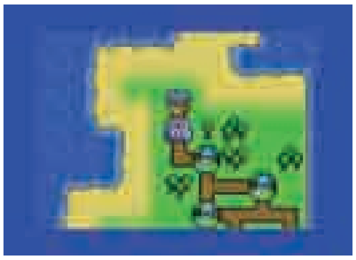
- » **FORMAT:** AMIGA A1200/A4000
- » **RELEASE DATE:** TBA
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** JIGSAW LOUNGEÐPUBLISHER: ALTEN8
- » **PUBLISHER:** COSINE
- » **PRICE:** TBA
- » **REVIEWED BY:** DAVE JOHNSTONE

It's never easy being cute, is it? And being a cute hero is even more difficult. *Mr Beanbag's* friend and mentor Mr Fizzy Pop has been kidnapped and is held captive by the infamous Count Gazpacho, deep in the Antarctic (don't ask). So, our hero is on an adventure to rescue him, starting in his homelands and travelling through 40 levels to victory.

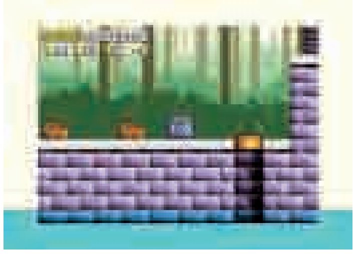
This game is full of classic and fast-paced platform action, showing off the great capabilities of the AGA Amiga. It starts a little like *Super Mario World*, in that you move to the next levels and can replay old ones, but plays in a similar way to *Sonic the Hedgehog*, at least to the extent that it's a fast-moving game that and the main character can roll and charge his foe if there's a hill that will allow you to pick up enough pace, as well as the traditional way - hitting them on a weak spot on their head. It's always advisable to explore, as that way you'll find all of the hidden bonus items as well as the jellybeans that are much loved by our hero. Every so often, you'll pass a point that you restart from if you loose a life – loss of life will mean that you'll have to recollect the bonuses that you found last time.

What you get is a quality from the outset; exploring each level whilst finding the best way to despatch the foes is a tried and tested formula, but when it's done well, it should be applauded. Believe me, this is done very well. My only issue with this game is that the main sprite, though effortless, fast and responsive, could have had a little more animation to it. *Mr Beanbag* is certainly something to look forward to. Time to dig out your A1200 again.

RATING **88%**



» Cute platform action returns to the Amiga A1200 with *Mr Beanbag*

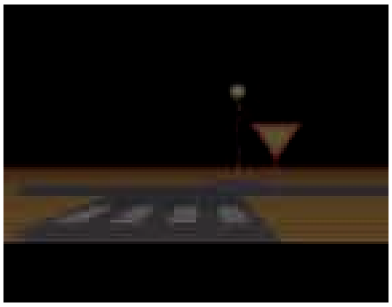


» The enhnced AGA graphics give *Mr Beanbag* a great look

EMULATION NATION



» The numbers reach into the thousands every year at The Gathering demo party in Norway.



» Phenomena's 1991 *Enigma* demo made extensive use of early 3D experimentation

FORGET PUBLIC DOMAIN, WE RETURN TO

THE SCENE

Before the Internet, hackers of the world found solidarity through a unique multimedia platform of technological nonconformity and a defiant cyberpunk lifestyle. An international network of likeminded anarchists pushed the boundaries of hardware, with dazzling innovations of code for no other purpose than creatively breaking rules and raising two fingers to the corporate world that claimed ownership of cyberspace. These were the hallowed days of the underground subculture known as The Scene.

"AN EARLY CRACKING GROUP WOULD GENERALLY CONSIST OF A PROGRAMMER, GRAPHIC ARTIST AND A 'SWAPPER' (WHO MADE THE CONTACTS AND ACQUIRED NEW COMMERCIAL SOFTWARE"

The general opinion during the embryonic days of computer programming was that information should be free, and many computing enthusiasts saw a program not as a distinct product, but as a compilation of digital information. Since copy protection prohibited them from looking around 'inside' the code and from expanding the free sharing of knowledge, it was viewed as an immoral, selfish exclusion. This was contrary to the hacker's ideals of an uncontaminated, emancipated cyber-world.

Early 'back bedroom' developers and young university scholars saw their scene as being unconstrained by corporate greed, free to express itself and the property of no one. Many early hackers would argue that the corporations stole the programming scene long before any commercial copyright laws were broken, and refused to recognise their financially acquired authority.

As the scene was pushed underground, hackers were given an enemy against which to mount a resistance, dedicating themselves to the liberation of their cherished information. Although happy to carry out these nefarious duties without payment, their new status as guerrilla fighters meant that accreditation became a prerequisite, a matter of publicity and ego that clashed with the illegality of their endeavours.

Cryptic pseudonyms were employed to avoid traceability, whilst still building a felonious reputation. Crackers (as apposed to 'hackers') would add a tagline to a game's loading screen or title menu, so all who acquired the illegitimate software knew who to send their good vibes and sardonic prayers toward. It also allowed them to take part in friendly (if savage) competition within their own community.

Whoever released cracked versions of the newest games first, achieved the greatest coverage with their underground distribution or displayed the utmost skill at circumventing advanced copy protection, gained credibility and respect from the community of peers, all the while remaining ambiguously anonymous.

Before long, a couple of subtle sentences secreted at the bottom of the screen became insufficient for the increasing amount crackers had to say, and scrolling lines of text were employed to get their messages to the world. The desire to reign supreme in the cracking world was becoming so intense that the act of reverse engineering games lost much of its prowess, replaced by the grandeur and inventiveness of the scrolling messages and logos that were squeezed into the minuscule room left over after the game code.

As graphical elements became an integral part of the cracker's signature, artistic help was drafted in to improve on the visuals, and groups began forming to spread the mounting workload.

An early cracking group would generally consist of a programmer, graphic artist and a 'swapper' (who made the contacts and acquired new commercial software to be cracked).

Naturally, as more people got involved, there was more to say. The footnotes on the game screens became fully-fledged introductions (known as 'cracktros') before the game data was shown, allowing for more sensational, full screen soapboxes. Background music was a natural addition, and computer musicians were also brought into many groups.

Crackers soon appreciated improved copy protection in new games as breaking it carried increased credibility, which was the one and only commodity of any value in the scene. In addition to liberating code within a matter

TO SPANNER, THE AMIGA DEMO SCENE WAS ABOUT FREE EXPRESSION, A LOVE OF COMPUTING, EXPLORATION OF CREATIVITY AND INTERNATIONAL UNITY THROUGH A NEW ARTISTIC MEDIUM. THE PIRATE GAMES WERE JUST A BONUS.

THE JUGGLER



In 1986, Eric Graham released '*The Juggler*', an animation that is regularly credited as inspiring many demo groups to throw away their user manuals and discover the endless potential of the Amiga. Although not subscribing to the loose parameters of a demo, the ray traced animation consisted of a figure built of spheres, juggling three large chrome balls.
When Graham sent the finished piece to Commodore, the engineers insisted the A500 was incapable of rendering such a thing itself, saying it must have been constructed on a mainframe then saved to a compatible format. Once Graham demonstrated his custom ray tracing software to Commodore, they immediately bought the animation to use as promotional software, while Byte by Byte bought his ray tracer and packaged it as *Sculpt 3D* (Eric's wife, Cathryn, even wrote the user manual).

of hours of receiving the original software, crackers began weaving their presence into the games themselves by adding 'trainers' to their cracktro, providing players with the option of infinite lives during play, for example, or removing time limits. These trainers made cracked games all the more appealing to young players, and appreciation grew exponentially. There are even circumstances of crackers removing bugs from commercial releases, so as not to have the inherent faults tarnish their hard earned reputations!

Competition between crackers was shifting from the pedestrian act of piracy to the extravagance of the cracktro, and the narcissistic statements they broadcasted. Compressing all this grandiosity into such diminutive disk space took feats of coding extraordinary enough to make professional programmers blush. What were effectively 'kids' with little or no computing education were gathering knowledge of their chosen systems with such intimacy they went beyond recognised definitions of programming and into the realms of artistry.

As the law began ruthlessly perusing the cracking networks, groups started drifting away from security breaking (often led by the artists and musicians who could see no benefit in being sent down simply for applying their talents to a specific media); they put their skills into demonstrating the group's collective abilities using the entire system's resources, and a new art form was fostered in the embers of the piracy firestorm.

Although the demo scene spanned many different systems, it was the Amiga that became the weapon of choice for the majority of groups eager to demonstrate their amazing talents. What could be considered the first ever demo is a matter of scholastic debate, since the transition from cracktro to dedicated demo was quite organic, with no specific occurrence representing the beginnings of the scene. If anything, the release of the Amiga computer itself is the landmark event that heralded in the oldskool demo scene.

Thereafter, the definition of a demo was quickly established and any deviance from this format could result in fast and brutal reproach from within the community. A 'demo' was a non-interactive platform, displayed and rendered in real time. The computer, using skillful programming techniques rather than pre-rendered animations or movies stored on disk, generated all the effects, music, objects and texts presented during the demo. Remarkably quickly, demo groups were finding the boundaries of the hardware and crashing through them without care, dazzling not only participants within the scene but the computing and artistic worlds in general.



» Everything a demo junkie could want: Equalisers, bits'n'bobs', scrollers and rolling chequered floors. Phenomena's Mega Demo



» The Grapevine diskzine from LSD kept sceners up to date on all subjects, no matter how controversial they might be

GREETINGS AND CREDITS

UNLIKE MOST RETRO CONTENT, THE DEMO SCENE NEVER REALLY DISAPPEARED, AND WAS ONE OF THE FIRST COMMUNITIES TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE INTERNET. THIS MEANS THERE'S A WEALTH OF MATERIAL FOR ANYONE WANTING TO TREAD THE HALLS OF THE OLDSKOOL, OR SEE WHAT'S BEING TAUGHT IN THE NEWSKOOL.

http://www.scene.org/ A TOP ALL-ROUNDER site, with as much content about the current scene as that of yesteryear. This is the place to come if you want to keep abreast of the demo culture. Many of the other websites are hosted by Scene.org.

http://www.pouet.net ONE OF THE largest databases of the scene, with an easy to use categorisation system. They readily accept submissions and are a great place to converse with other sceners and comment on your favourite demos.

http://www.ojuice.net ANOTHER EXHAUSTIVE DEMO scene portal dedicated to providing the latest news and retrospectives of the entire scene. One of the oldest on the net, Orange Juice derives its name from the fact that '…it sounds better than Apple Juice'.

http://ada.planet-d.net/ THE AMIGA DEMO Archive is a stylish and comprehensive repository of Amiga demos, from the old to the new. Well organised with screenshots, info, credits and downloads, this is the place to find that demo you used to love.

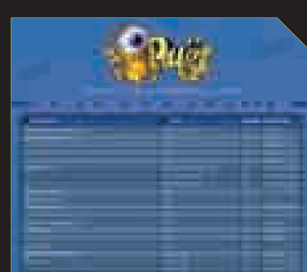
http://www.mindcandydvd.com MIND CANDY IS a video compilation on DVD, of PC demos from over the years to watch on your set top box. Currently, there is only volume one (which covers PC-based demos), but volume two is promised that will showcase Amiga software.

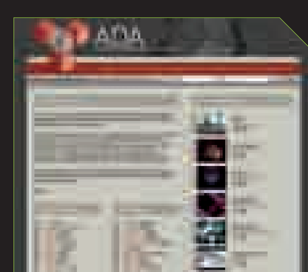
http://www.gathering.org/espresso/ THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE for TG party, with news, reviews, info and articles about the whole shindig.

http://www.slengpung.com/ IN THEIR OWN words: 'This site is dedicated to collecting photos from demo scene parties and meetings all around the world. If you don't want to watch ugly nerds, we recommend visiting this site instead.'

http://www.furnitureporn.com/ I ALSO RECOMMEND that site. It has nothing to do with the demo scene, but it's bloody hilarious!

http://www.assembly.org/ THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE for the popular Finnish demo party, the Assembly. Plenty of info about past and upcoming parties, as well as the option to buy tickets online.





EMULATION NATION

TO SPANNER, THE AMIGA DEMO SCENE WAS ABOUT FREE EXPRESSION, A LOVE OF COMPUTING, EXPLORATION OF CREATIVITY AND INTERNATIONAL UNITY THROUGH A NEW ARTISTIC MEDIUM. THE PIRATE GAMES WERE JUST A BONUS.

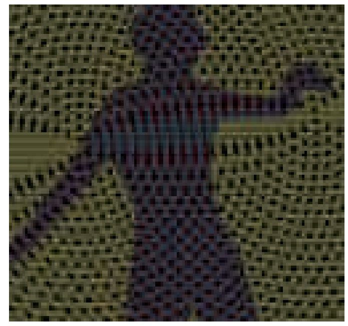


» Swappers spread their details quite openly for such an illegitimate business, but it was the best way to get that all-important credibility





» **Above Left:** The origin of demos lies in the introductions to pirated games, known as 'cracktros' **Right:** The Amiga/Atari ST war raged in the demo community, and it has to be said that the Amiga won



» Some demos were nothing short of spectacular music videos, like Spaceball's 1992 techno extravaganza.

SWAP TILL YOU DROP

Swapping could be very expensive, and more than a few groups have been caught at their illicit business not from cracking, but by recycling the stamps used to send out their wares. A thin layer of hairspray or wax was applied to the stamps so the postmarks could be washed off. The recipient would then send them back with their return disks. In itself, this wasn't considered a particularly harsh crime and was rarely followed by legal action, but there was always the danger of it drawing attention to the digital contraband inside the parcel.

Bulletin boards were equally costly, although the increased logistical efficiency was very enticing to an ego-hungry group. To alleviate call costs, crackers would often apply their skills to 'phreaking' the telephone networks, so some other poor unfortunate would receive the bill for their 24-hour international phone calls!



» Many other systems were active in the demo scene, not just the Amiga. The SNES has even had zines, like Censor Design's 1993 Consol Shock

Intricate graphics were displayed (and manipulated by way of dexterous algorithms) against equally impressive backdrops that could shame many a rock album cover, whilst various impressive – and not easily achieved – elements, such as elaborate scrolling texts, large 'bob' and 'sprite' manipulation, 'copper bars' and active graphic equalisers became the staple diet for demos. Pioneering work was also done on 3D vector shapes floating and rotating around the screen, while winding trains of blitter objects (or 'bobs') snaked their way about the busy, action packed screen.

A simple side scrolling text would never suffice for any self respecting code junky, and masterful use of spatial algorithms gave the 2D fonts a dynamic pseudo-3D life; twisting, stretching, deforming and spiralling in and out of the screen, all while the groups lengthy, subversive messages rolled past. The content of a typical scroller consisted of credits for the demo, tales of debauched copy parties, details of other software or cracks from the group, unrestrained slating of any 'lamers' who had offended a particular group, and the all important greetings.

It was the job of the swapper, who held and maintained the group's contacts, to keep the list of greetings up to date, as having your own group's name appear on as many other greeting lists as possible was one of the most effective methods of attaining the much desired infamy.

Although many groups were gravitating away from the cracking scene, the members, at the very least, still wanted new games, so the swappers would still exchange cracked software even if the group were not especially active in that respect. An established swapper could have worldwide contacts, sending and receiving hundreds of disks every week through the post; passing out his group's new software and circulating those sent to him.

Naturally, the scene was ideally suited to an internet-based community, but certainly during its golden age there was no such thing.

Many swappers took on the role of systems operators (sysops) of Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs), realising the potential of a global computer network while the internet was still having its nose wiped by its mother. Quickly, every respected demo group set up their own BBS and advertised them in the scroller of their demos or in dedicated mini-demos or intros, designed and distributed specifically for the purpose of inviting members to their board.

Another popular method of exchanging wares was in person at 'copy parties', where various demo sceners would get together with their computers and spend a couple of days copying disks, drinking, eating pizza and generally reinventing the hacker lifestyle. These parties ranged from smaller, more regular local gatherings (more than once I ran out the back door of the ICI Social Club in Huddersfield with Amiga under arm and torn leads flailing!) to vast international meetings of hundreds of different groups eager to be seen and revered.

As the content of the scrolling texts grew, disk-based scene magazines began to appear, more often referred to as 'diskmags', 'diskzines' or simply 'zines'. These would contain frank and uninhibited articles about every aspect of the demo (and often cracking) scene, with no-holds-barred slating of anyone who had proven themselves a lamer, open advertising of copy parties, how to avoid prosecution and hot new software circulating the networks; legal and otherwise.

Famous among the zines were LSD's (one of England's most famous groups), Grapevine and the renowned Illegal Magazine that started early on in the C64 scene and only stopped when its editor was arrested for swapping, almost ten years after the magazine began (although he was later 'presumed' innocent due to a lack of testimonials).

The scene, that was born out of a desire to provide free information to the world, has not changed in twenty years, affirming the desire for a computerised youth to discover their own way, rather than being force fed corporately controlled propaganda and blindly following the corrupt media machine.

And, at long last, every programmer's dream since the beginning of code itself is coming true; girls are finally appearing on the scene!

"MANY EARLY HACKERS WOULD ARGUE THAT THE CORPORATIONS STOLE THE PROGRAMMING SCENE LONG BEFORE ANY COMMERCIAL COPYRIGHT LAWS WERE BROKEN"

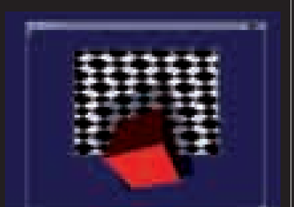


» Amiga demos are still popular, and have evolved along with the rest of the scene. Ozone's 1999 Smoke Bomb demo exemplifies the ability of that incredible machine

NO LAMERS ALLOWED

HERE'S A SELECTION OF MY FAVOURITE DEMOS FROM THE OLDSKOOL AMIGA SCENE. A LOT WERE NEVER OFFICIALLY RANKED; BUT I LIKED THEM WHEN THEY WERE NEW AND LOVE THEM NOW THEY'RE RETRO

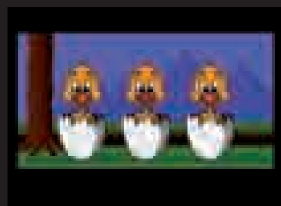


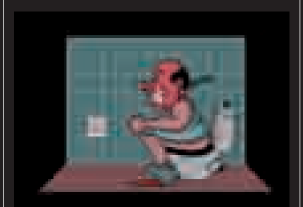


D.O.S BY ANDROMEDA - 1992

The incredible mystery of D.O.S. first appears during the boot sequence as a typical Workbench DOS window opens to load the demo, with working mouse pointer, resize icons and a nice blue background. Amazingly, the demo actually runs inside the window, with graphics, vectors, music and all! A scrolling chequered path magically winds its way out of the DOS window, as a miniature scroller replaces the 'AmigaDOS' text on the top bar!

As it turned out, the solution to the amazing DOS box mystery was embarrassingly simple; it was all just background graphics, but applied so subtly and smoothly that the initial impression is never lost, even after the secrets are exposed. Granted, it may have been simple, but its subtlety still manages to impress to this day. Technically impressive and clever to boot.



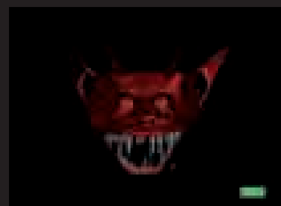



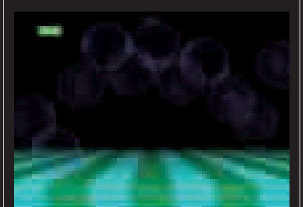
BUDBRAIN MEGADEMO BY BUDBRAIN - 1990

Released at the Amiga Conference party, Danish group Budbrain made a huge impact with their light-hearted, anarchic comedy mega demo. Budbrain's sheer entertainment value – something too many demo groups put to the back burner in favour of self-hype and slander – firmly established them as scene legends.

Occasionally slated for its lack of coding prowess, Budbrain was one of those rare pieces that didn't waste disk space on a quest to prove the Amiga's ability with vectors and bobs.

Of particular note is the fantastic house music soundtrack, especially in the Kaos scene that, after watching those 'Where Were You In 1990?' talk-stupid showcases for z-list celebrities, shamed much of the music video content commercially available at the time. Plus, who can resist beat-boxing chickens?



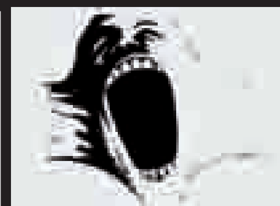
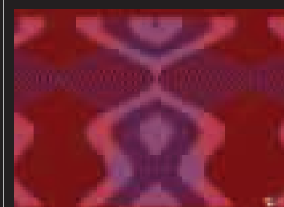
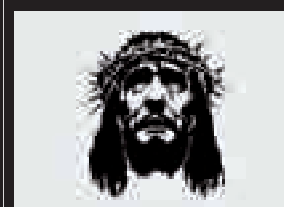



TECHNOLOGICAL DEATH BY THE MAD ELKS - 1993

Winner of Mountain Congress 1993 party was Poland's premier demo team, the Mad Elks. Their fast-paced, hardcore rave endurance test has always been a firm favourite, with graphics, music and code in equal, spectacular quality.

Of particular importance is the digital countdown timer in the corner of the screen that periodically flips and spins up to the front of the display, twirls off to different corners and eventually repeats itself to fill the entire screen – an amazing demonstration of the inherent coding skills running in the background of superior demos.

Technological Death fits into a category that appeared toward the end of the oldskool era, known as a 'trackmo'. Rather than distinct scenes separated by loading and unpacking, a trackmo was seamless, constantly loading as the demo played. Very impressive.

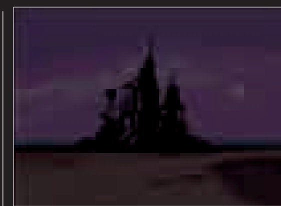




JESUS ON E'S BY LSD - 1992

Jesus on E's changed the look, shape and sound of the scene – becoming the yard stick by which all music demos were measured. LSD was the UK's most infamous group and publishers of the underground diskzine, Grapevine.

A masterful synchronisation of the psychedelic coding effects is demonstrated, which make up the bulk of the bad-trip showcase accompanied by an outstanding techno soundtrack that belongs on a white label, rather than floppy disks.

The few bad points that have ever been spoken about Jesus on E's is the repetition of the visuals during its thirty minute runtime, though this is more of a misinterpretation than a flaw. The demo was as much based on the outstanding music, with a visual accompaniment used to set the atmosphere for a well-stoned messiah! Utterly essential viewing.





HARDWIRED BY THE SILENTS & CRIONICS - 1991

A true oldskool demo in every sense of the word, winning second place at The Party back in 1991. One unusual aspect of this demo was its collaboration between two already esteemed demo groups, The Silents and Crionics.

After Hardwired, trends began shifting toward more impressive graphics and commercially sounding music, and while both are well represented here (particularly in the gothic sci-fi intro), the demo's artistry is in its coding. The twisting scroller looks to have been cut from two inch thick gold and silver ribbon, while their pixelised vectors melt into dust and flow like liquid from one form to the next. It all looks utterly gorgeous.

The real art of what demos were, and always will be, is in the creativeness of their coding, and it takes a partnership of this quality to truly realise it.

HIGH SCORE

Q*bert

HE'S CUTE, BOUNCY AND SOUNDS LIKE A MALFUNCTIONING SPEAK AND SPELL WITH TOURETTES. THIS MONTH, GAMING GRANDMA DORIS SELF GIVES US A GUIDE TO Q*BERT.

Released in 1982, *Q*bert* was something of a surprise hit for newcomers to the videogame market, Gottlieb. It evolved from an experiment by programmer Kan Yabumoto (who would later create *Mad Planets*), which filled the screen with carefully coloured hexagons to give the illusion of 3D. Warren Davis envisioned removing most of the cubes to leave a pyramid structure floating in space and was joined on the project by Jeff Lee, who created the characters and did all the graphics, and Dave Thiel who contributed the sound, including *Q*bert's* gibberish speech.

Whilst Davis was the sole programmer, he welcomed ideas from the entire Gottlieb family. Ron Waxman, VP of Engineering suggested *Q*bert* should be charged with changing the colours of the cubes and Howie Rubin, VP of marketing, originally christened the game '@!#?@!'. Early cabinets were actually shipped with this expletive as the title – until it was realised that marketing a game with an unpronounceable name would be tricky. If only Prince had taken note.

*Q*bert* stood out amongst the slew of space-themed shooters filling the arcades at the dawn of the Golden Age. It could confuse – the diagonal control system flummoxed many – but it could also charm. Here was a character with personality, which might explain why the big-nosed bouncing one was soon gracing lunch boxes, board games and even his own TV cartoon show. But just what is he saying in that exasperated speech bubble? "I have my own theory,' reveals Davis, 'but it wouldn't be printable in a magazine."

For more on *Q*bert* and Warren Davis, see Retro Gamer 21.



» Doris at the CGEuk last year, where she scored a cool 2 million before going for an afternoon nap…

THE EXPERT

The hurricane that hit Florida last year caused untold misery and suffering to thousands. The elderly were particularly vulnerable to the freak weather conditions, none more so than Doris Self, an 80 year-old resident of Fort Lauderdale.

"We had no electricity for days," she explains, recalling the painful ordeal. "It meant I couldn't play on my *Q*bert* machine. Oh, I missed it terribly."

*Q*bert* has undeniably become an obsession for Doris. She plays it at least three times a day since *Pac-Man* champ Billy 'Perfect Hair' Mitchell bought her an original cabinet to encourage Doris to regain the tournament World Record and her former title of 'Oldest Videogaming Champion'. Yet the hours she spends on the pyramid is not solely in pursuit of that elusive high score – it provides a more therapeutic function too.

"I play it if I can't get to sleep. By the time I reach level 9, I'm usually ready for bed. It calms me down and stops me thinking about anything that's stressing me out."

It's a role that *Q*bert* has played in Doris's life since she first became acquainted with the game in the early Eighties. Born in 1925 in Boston, Massachusetts, arcades were obviously not a part of her childhood. Her career included spells as a legal secretary, a lifeguard and then many years as an air stewardess for Eastern Airlines. When her husband of 32 years passed away, it was her daughter who took her out one evening for a movie and a pizza, and Doris made a new friend.

"While we were waiting for the food to arrive, my daughter said, 'Mom, I think you'll like this'. Famous last words. It was *Q*bert* and that was the first game I ever played."

It was to be an enduring friendship. Doris discovered a 24-hour arcade close to her home and would spend many evenings there, playing many of the classics but always returning to *Q*bert*. Sessions would frequently stretch into the wee small hours and she was getting good. Really good. Enough to catch the eye of Twin Galaxies, who encouraged her to travel up to Atlanta, Georgia, for a Tournament in June of 1984.

"The organisers only had my initial and surname,' Doris recalls with a giggle. "They didn't even know I was female, let alone an old lady of 59. They had me rooming with a 15 year-old boy from Miami. I just said, 'Think of me as your Grandmother – change your clothes in the bathroom and we won't have any problems.'"

And Doris didn't. Her score of 1,112,300 on tournament setting (5 lives only) made her the *Q*bert* Queen, until Tom Gault seized the throne with a score just shy of 1.9 million the following year. She still hopes to retake the record and with an unofficial best of 1.4 million, she's within reach. Yet Doris is the first to acknowledge the difficulty of the challenge.

"I think I could do it with 8 men, rather than 5, but if your timing's off just half a second, you get clobbered. I can get 8 million on marathon setting easily, but after 8 hours or so, I'm just too tired to go on."

But Doris never tires of *Q*bert*. So what exactly is the appeal of the little feller that's kept her entranced for over two decades? There's a twinkle in her eye as she answers. "Well, my girlfriends call him the orange penis…"

THE KNOWLEDGE

"At the start of each level, go down the side where there isn't a disc low down. Then

HIGH SCORE NEWS

Space Harrier World Record holder Nick Hutt has not only upped his personal best to almost 38 million, he now has a new goal in sight. He's currently restoring a full size *OutRun* cabinet and plans to aim for more Sega glory… right after he's got busy with the wire wool…

New Year's Day saw a New World Record, as Jason Cram scored 96,070 on *Moonwar*, beating the previous best set back in 1983. The game was originally released by Stern in 1981 and is perhaps best remembered for the advertising flyer, which pictured a nubile beauty bending over the cabinet, inviting players to take 'the ultimate moon shot'. Bless those 80's ad men…



» *Q*bert's* enduring charm has seen him appear on virtually every home console since his birth



"WELL, MY GIRLFRIENDS CALL HIM THE ORANGE PENIS…"

DORIS SELF ON THE APPEAL OF Q*BERT

go along the bottom and back up the other side. Coily the snake will be after you, but you should have a disc close by if you need to use it.

Objects drop from the top of the screen onto the second row – one of two cubes – and after that their movement is random. However, the order and timing of what drops on to the pyramid is always the same each time you play a specific board. The secret to mastering *Q*bert* is learning this order, so you know exactly what is due on screen next and plan for it.

The freeze peas (green balls) are particularly useful, as everything on screen stops except you – level 2-4 is one of the hardest challenges because the freeze pea arrives so late in the board.

If Ugg and Wrong Way, the purple creatures that bounce on the sides of blocks, are getting close to you, it's sometimes best to stop. They then don't know which way to go and often move away from you.

Slick and Sam change the colour of cubes and if you know when they are due to arrive, you can sometimes leave them to change the final block on a pyramid to the right colour. However, it's usually best to get rid of them quickly before they mess up your board, especially at the higher levels.

The game goes up to level 9, which then repeats infinitely. However, the order of objects falling into play never changes after level 5-3. If you learn that sequence and are able to count the seconds to predict when something's due, you will know the 'psyche' of the game and can go for a really high score."



» Billy 'Benefactor' Mitchell checks his 'Hot Sauce' share price, as Doris gets busy with his gift

BARGAIN HUNT

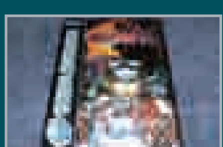
HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF ALL THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to also have a rough idea of how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is a *Retro Gamer* buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japan auctions, car boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items can often be found cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher, make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over 100 different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it!

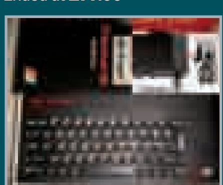
RETRO AUCTION WATCH

***Retro Gamer* will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. If something has sold for a staggeringly high amount of money (or lower than it normally would) you'll find them listed here.**

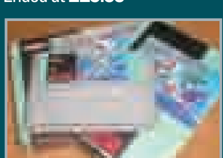
BURNING RANGERS
Saturn
Normally sells for **£28 +**
Ended at **£13.01**



SPECTRUM 128K (Boxed)
Normally sells for **£40 +**
Ended at **£77.00**



MEGA MAN X
SNES
Normally sells for **£14 +**
Ended at **£25.55**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45 - £60**

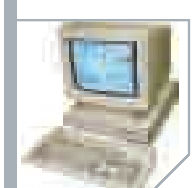


PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60**

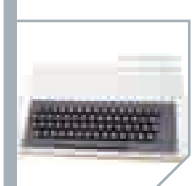


PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £35**
While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released!
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

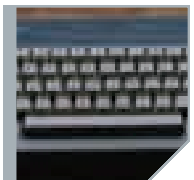
ACORN



ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 (with games)**
Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.
- VIRUS (STRIPPED DOWN VERSION OF ZARCH)



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50**
Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**
Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).



BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**
An classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 - £25**
Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor!



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £25**
Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+**
Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- RENEGADE
- RICK DANGEROUS
- GRYZOR



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50-£70**
Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE



APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ (with games)**
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built machine and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+**
Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £30**
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

- ROCKING HORSE SHIT
- HEN'S TEETH
- LUCKY FIND
- EBAY REGULAR
- CAR BOOT SALE BARGAIN

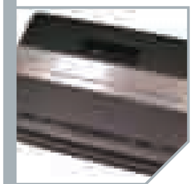


5200

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30**

Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.

- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800

» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £40**

Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.

- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES

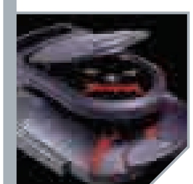


JAGUAR

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's Tempest!

- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70**

Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!

- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD



LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**

Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.

- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



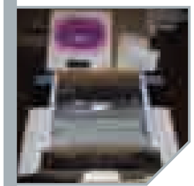
ST

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 depending on model**

Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models of various specifications.

- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£75 (prices fluctuate wildly)**

Ultra rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.

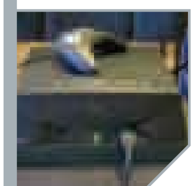


PLAYDIA

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 and upwards according to eBay**

Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.

- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



PIPPIN(ATMARK)

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx. £500+**

A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. It's high prce means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.

- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



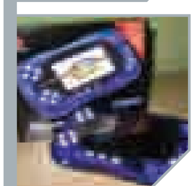
WONDERSWAN (B/W)

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**



WONDERSWAN COLOR

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL

» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25**

Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.

- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



AMIGA500/600/1200

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 (more with games, depending on model)**

Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore, that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models, with differing specs, the Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.

- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

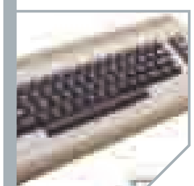


C16/PLUS 4

» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 - £30**

The less-well known siblings of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.

- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 - £30**

One of the best selling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.

- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID

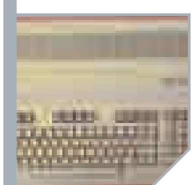


C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Aprox. £30**

Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.

- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND



C128

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 - £50**

Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.



CDTV

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

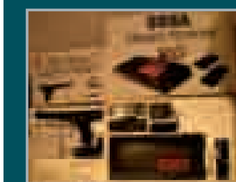
MARIO PARTY 3

N64
Normally sells for **£20 +**
Ended at **£38.77**



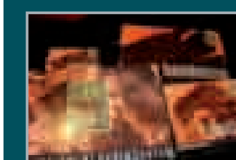
SEGA MASTER SYSTEM

(Light Gun set)
Normally sells for £20 +
Ended at **£54.71**



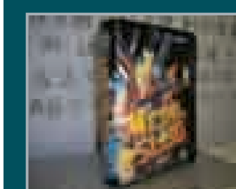
TURBO GRAFX 16

(with extras)
Normally sells for **£45 +**
Ended at **£21.00**



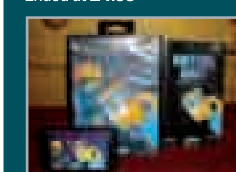
METAL SLUG

Neo Geo AES
Normally sells for **£1,000 +**
Ended at **£549.00**



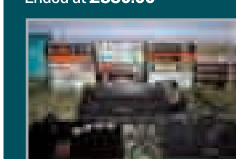
VIRTUAL BART

Normally sells for **£200 +**
Ended at **£4.99**



NEO GEO AND 20 GAMES

Normally Sells for **£470 +**
Ended at **£350.00**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25**
CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.
- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 - £30 depending on condition/extras**
The computer that established Commodore brand.
- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU



FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+**
Powerful early 90s home computers by Fujitsu, which could read CDs.



FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+**
A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive, (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!
- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**
Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.
- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



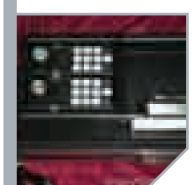
BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5**
Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…
–1ltr Bottle of Jack Danials
– Smarties
– Retro Gamer 19



CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25**
More inanity from the land of the rising sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out…Casio hoped it would do better than their failed PV-1000 console released in 1983.



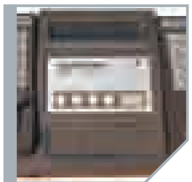
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 (from the USA)**
The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 standalone**
Coleco's third generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.
-CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 (very cheap on eBay)**
Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early 1980s boom. Short-lived though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.
- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**
Failed console by Emmerson, which had numerous different clones released as well.
- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT ATTACK



EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**
Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30**
Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, which was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 upwards depending on extras**
Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.
- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**
The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act! Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 depending on condition/model**
Another attempt by Sony to enter the videogame hardware market (after the MSX), this time they took over the market. There are countless undocumented yet excellent PS games. Was later re-released as the PSOne, which is more expensive, but looks much nicer in design.
- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPE
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 (allegedly for a mint complete system)**
Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupe was a unique 8-bit British home computer which didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.
- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



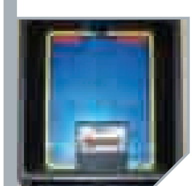
SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**
Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisngly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.
- ALIEN
- HONEY BEE
- POLICE BUST



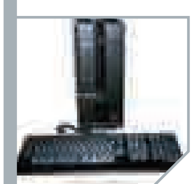
TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**
Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.
- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**
Series of old computers by Tomy.



VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80**
The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.
- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE

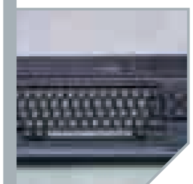


X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 upwards**
Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.
- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

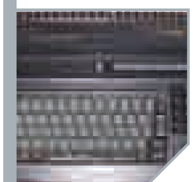
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 - £30**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 - £50**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent homebrew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER

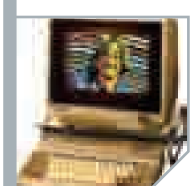


MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 - £50**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 - £90**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

NEC



PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10-£50 depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of very cool Japanese games for it. Released in the USA as the NEC Trek. While fairly cheap, be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has surprisingly a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



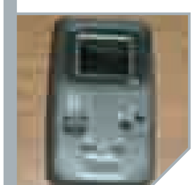
PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 depending on extras**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 (can be found quite cheap)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two system's Hu-Cards are not mutually compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 (massive fluctuations)**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- BLOODY WOLF
- NINJA SPIRIT



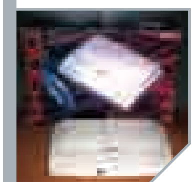
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 (prices can fluctuate)**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had 6 games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PCE CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 upwards**
CD-ROM add-on for the PCE and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PCE DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120**
System that combines the PCE/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.



DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80**
Stripped down white version of the PCE Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a 6 button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

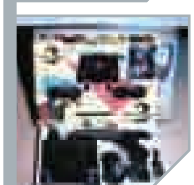
NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over a 1000 games to choose from!



FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



FAMICLONE
» YEAR **N/A**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**
Mass produced pirate versions of the Famicom system. Virtually infinite different designs.
- CRISIS FORCE
- SWEET HOME
- HAUNG DI



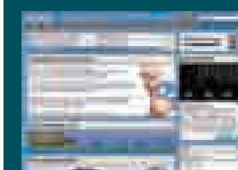
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

RETRO GAMING SITES

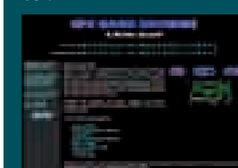
WORLD OF SPECTRUM
Whether you fancy hanging out on the friendly forum, or just want to play a few Spectrum games, there's no better site than World of Spectrum. An essential resource site for Spectrum lovers everwhere.
www.worldofspectrum.org



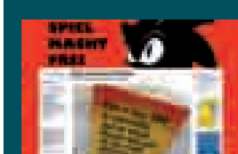
LEMON64
Come on people, Lemon64 was close to closing down recently due to lack of traffic. Rectify this straight away by heading on over to one of the most dedicated C64 sites around. You'll be glad you did.
www.lemon64.com



CPC GAME REVIEWS
All praise to Nicholas Campbell. He's filled his site with hundreds of CPC reviews and it's even possible to download certain games for your own pleasure. Amstrad owners should definately check this site out.
www.cpcgamereviews.co.uk



UK RESISTANCE
Not a retro gaming site but any website that has as much love for Sega as us clearly deserves a mention. If you're looking for a caustic, amusing take on the world of videogames, then UK Resistance is just the thing.
www.ukresistance.co.uk/





SHARP FAMICOM TWIN

» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100**

Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp. Comes in two colours, black and pink.

- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



GAME&WATCH

» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1 - £200**

Series of small handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yoko.



GAME BOY B/W

» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5**

Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite it's age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET

» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8**

A smaller and more compact GB, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.

- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR

» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12**

Colour-based version of the classic GB. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.

- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



GAME BOY ADVANCE

» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25**



N64

» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**

Nintendo's last cartridge based console, competitor to the Playstation and Saturn. Has several highly sought after classics. Some games (like Donkey Kong) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.

- SIN & PUNISHMENT
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



N64 DD

» YEAR **1999**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **£150 and upwards!**

Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of their cartridge based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.

- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15**

The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and very cheap too.

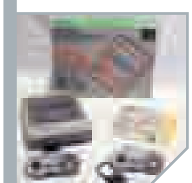


NES (DOG BONE)

» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50**

Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72 pin based NES games work.

- VICE: PROJECT DOOM
- SNAKE'S REVENGE
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of their most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JPN)

» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £100**

Cheaper and redesigned SNES.

- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80**

Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches.

- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



CD-I 205/210/220

» YEAR **from1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 (more with Digital Video Card)**

Unique system by Philips.The 200 series consists of front loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



CD-I 450/490/740

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 (more with DVC)**

Consolised version of previous models, requires a different '9956' DVC.

- THE APPRENTICE
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000

» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**

Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**

A successor to the G7000, that was backwards compatible.

- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



32X

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 (must have RF + Mains)**

Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance the it's capabilities.

- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



DREAMCAST

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 depending on extras**

Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.

- IKARUGA
- CRAZY TAXI
- REZ

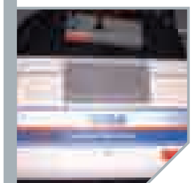


GAME GEAR

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 more with extras**

Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. Could also be used as a TV (as shown here).

- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20-£50**

Sega's first console, and a piece of history! The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



SC-3000

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx. £50**

Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.

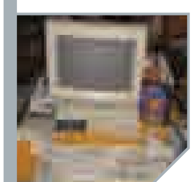


MASTER SYSTEM I/II

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 with leads etc.**

Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.

- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- NINJA GAIDEN



AMSTRAD MEGA PC

» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10.50 (according to eBay)**

A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



TERADRIVE

» YEAR **1991**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **Approx. £100**

Another Mega Drive computer

hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» » PRICE **£10 depending on model**

The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.



GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35**

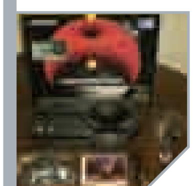
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100**

Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.

- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ depending on system**

CDX/Xeye

A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 depending on system**

Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games .

- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 (more with games)**

Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook style boxes.

- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR. AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK

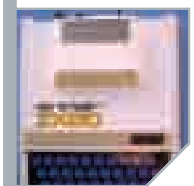


SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30**

Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse, that despite an amazing catalogue of games never really took off.

- SATURN BOMBERMAN
- GUARDIAN HEROES
- DRAGON FORCE

SINCLAIR



ZX-80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 Apparently if boxed and mint**

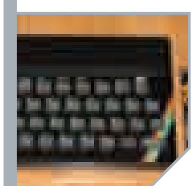
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



ZX-81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx. £70 if mint**

Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX-80, but still commands a respectable price.

- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
-SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40**



ZX SPECTRUM
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35**



ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35**



ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40**

The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, it was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many play ground arguments over who had the better machine.

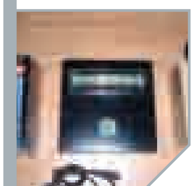
- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

SNK



NEOGEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150 and upwards**

High powered home system by SNK. Features many high quality arcade games. Sadly, due to the high price of the original games, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



NEOGEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx. £70 (multi-slot systems cost more)**

High powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of NeoGeo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted).

- METAL SLUG
- KING OF FIGHTERS ##
- WAKU WAKU 7



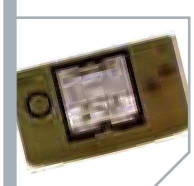
NEOGEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 varies**



NEOGEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 varies**

CD-based NeoGeo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of NeoGeo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has slightly improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.

- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHOWDOWN RPG



NEOGEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20**



NEOGEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35**

Handheld NeoGeo systems by SNK, that sadly failed in competing against the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.

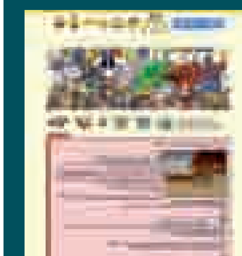
- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

RETRO GAMING SITES

THE VIDEO GAME MUSEUM

There's no denying that it features an awful amount of pop-up ads, but The Video Game Museum remains an essential resource site. Scans, screenshots, game endings; the list of material to look over just goes on and on. Investigate it when you have plenty of spare time.

http://www.vgmuseum.com/



KILLER LIST OF VIDEO GAMES

If you're looking for an exhaustive list of arcade titles, then look no further than the amazingly comprehensive KLOV. There's a stupid amount of screenshots to drool over, plenty of interesting facts and all the stats you could ever want for. An essential website.

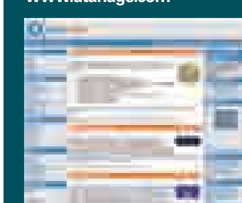
www.klov.com

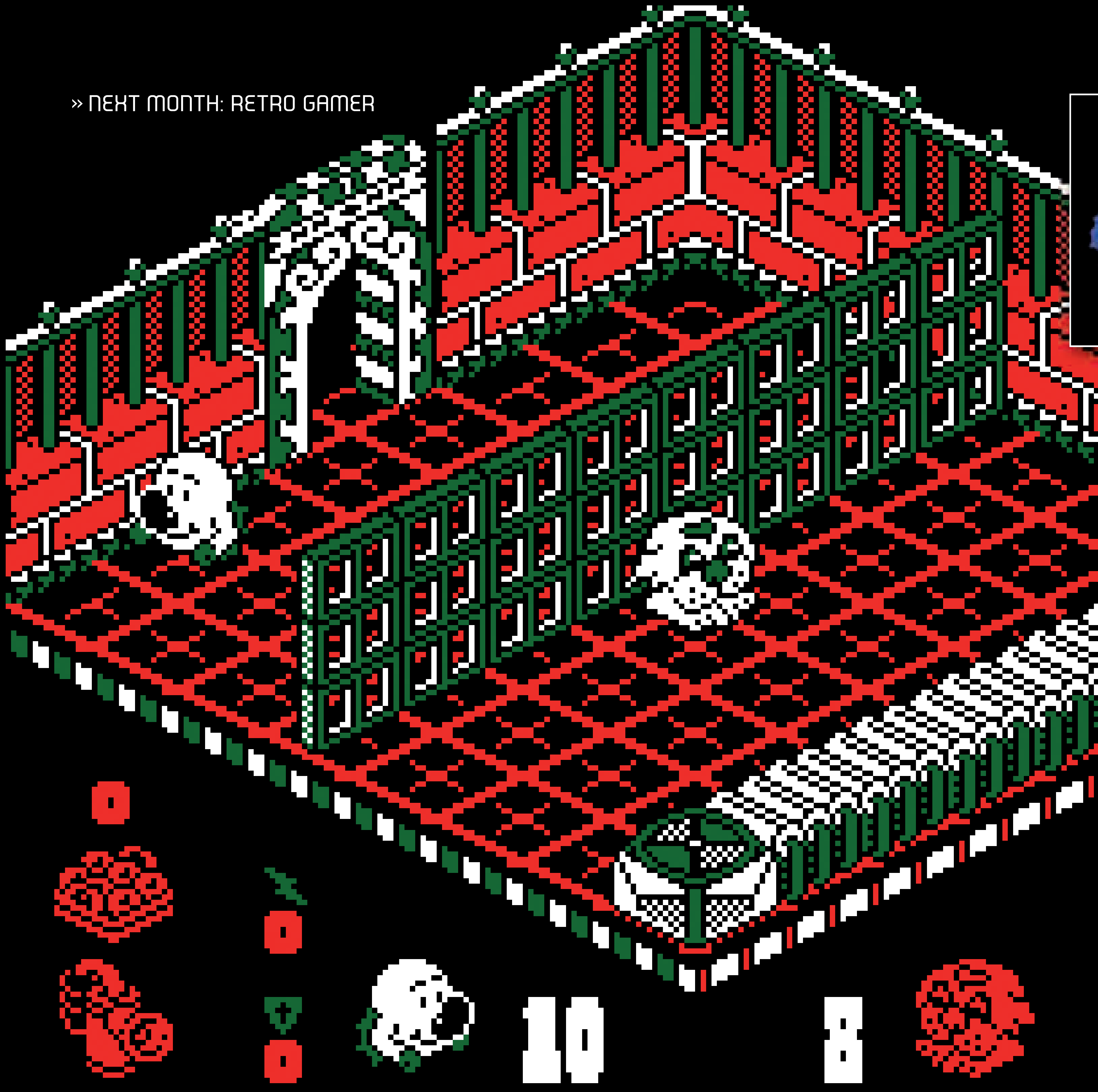


ATARI AGE

There are plenty of dedicated Atari sites on the Internet, but few come close to the staggering amount of information that's contained at the wonderful Atari Age. All systems are covered, games are listed by rarity and plenty of interesting reviews are available. A great site for all Atari users.

www.atariage.com







CONVERSION CAPERS

In a new feature Retro Gamer talks to the developers that were tasked with fitting classic arcade games into the less powerful home machines



COMPANY PROFILE

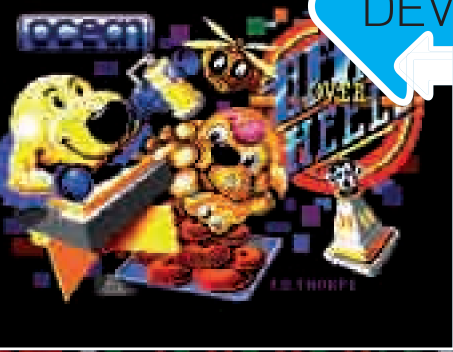
Barbarian, Cauldron and The Sacred Armour of Antiriad, just a few of Palace Software's many hits. We chat to founder Richard Leinnfellner about its rich legacy

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retro GAMER BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES

DEVELOPER LOOKBACK





OCEAN

Developer Lookback: From awful licences like Knight Rider and Highlander to the startling originality of Wizball and Head Over Heels; Retro Gamer charts the rise and fall of Ocean

AND THE REST…
Global Gaming
High Score
Reviews
News
Full of Eastern Promise
And much, much more



GOOD GOD

Power is good, so join Retro Gamer as we sift through the enormous genre that is the 'God Sim' and reveal its most essential titles

RETROINSPECTION

Many gamers consider the SNES to be one of the most versatile consoles ever created; join us and worship at its 16-bit temple

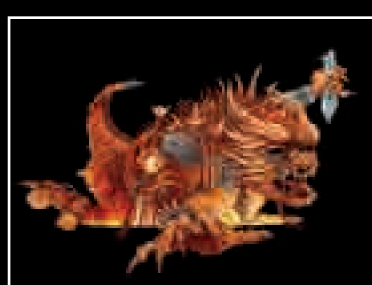
THE MAKING OF…

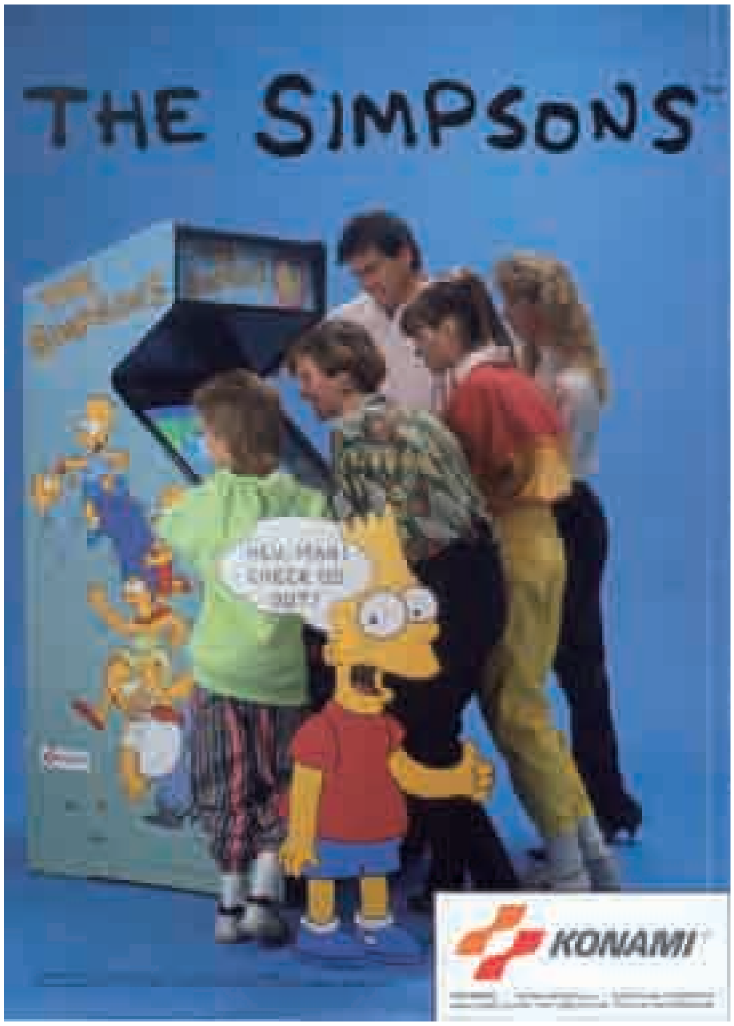
Retro Gamer speaks to Worms' creator Andy Davidson and finds out just what makes those maniacal annelids so enduring



THE MAKING OF…

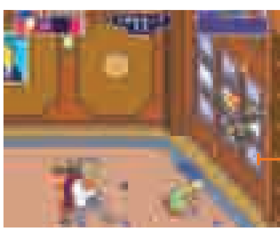
Retro Gamer speaks to Bloodwych's development team in order to find out everything there is to know about the first part of their fabled Trazere Trilogy





THE SIMPSONS

Konami produced some fantastic scrolling arcade fighters and its stunning realisation of The Simpsons remains a highpoint. After being led on a frantic chase through Springfield, the remaining Simpsons finally catch up with evil baby napper Waylon Smithers…



SCREEN 1

After kidnapping Maggie at the beginning of the game (she accidentally swallowed the diamond he'd stolen), Smithers reappears as the penultimate boss and proves to be a real pain in the arse.



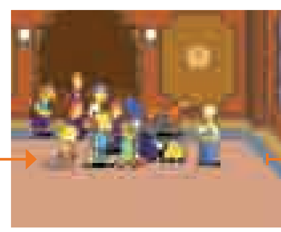
SCREEN 2

At last, the the true mastermind behind the theft makes himself known… Mr Burns. Resplendent in a multi-purpose metal suit, he presents a formidable foe for the remaining Simpsons.…



SCREEN 3

Yes, the evil old man is finally defeated and is further humiliated by little Maggie Simpson taking her dummy out and sticking it in the old man's mouth. That'll teach the old withered goon.



SCREEN 4

Several background characters appear on the scene to check out the ensuing drama, and no doubt begin to ask why they never actually received a main role in the game.



SCREEN 5

Ahh, the family is finally reunited and share a big group hug. As the credits start to roll, Springfield's most famous family finally begin the long trek home for a well-earned rest.